Shoemaker Village

Volume 35 - February 2000

NEW NOVEL TO BE INCLUDED BEGINNING THIS MONTH - INTERNATIONAL WRITER JOINS *VILLAGE* STAFF

-*Evan's Quest* by Daniel Burgess from Yorkshire, England, will be included over the next several months.

The Knights of the Square Table continues!

Find out if the knights survive to continue their quest!

-Will Dave escape from the troll camps?



PLUS!

The Bear Facts returns after a break in December!

The environment takes center stage in The Discussion Forum!

Winter returns to the neighborhood after a four-year hiatus!

Humor From the Village Square as strong as ever!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to the February issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

To begin this month, we would like to announce that another writer has agreed to join the *Village* and assist in its efforts. Daniel Burgess, 14 years old from Yorkshire, England, has agreed to contribute the fourth novel that has been included in the *Village*. The book, named *Evan's Quest*, begins with Evan, a boy living in medieval times, attempting to redeem himself to his father for not being able to help in the hunt. When Evan's father is accidentally injured in a bizarre hunting accident, the story is only beginning! The story is structured so that one chapter per month can be easily fit into the *Village* for publication over the coming year. The full length of the story has yet to be determined as it is still being written; however, the novel already exceeds six chapters. Be sure to check out this new addition to the magazine in the coming months. Don't miss out on the beginnings to this sure-to-be hit! For your pleasure, we have included two chapters of this epic to start off this month.

Had you been visiting the *Village* website during the past two months, you would have found out about Evan's Quest three weeks before this month's publication! The *Shoemaker Village* website (available at http://members.aol.com/shoevill) is constantly updated with the latest news on happenings about the *Village*, including neighborhood news before it is published in the *Village*. Free software is also available, as well as our expanding Humor from the Village Square database which features the best jokes from past issues of the *Village*, as well as some jokes that have never before been included! Join the 1,500 other visitors who have visited the website during December and January--you won't be disappointed!

Speaking of the *Village* website, the website will be changing its location on February 8 due to a change in internet service providers. We are currently unsure of the URL of the new location; however, be sure to visit the website before February 8 to keep up to date on this important move.

Unfortunately, this issue of the *Village* was delayed for an entire week due to the several snowstorms that ravaged the area, canceling schools and closing offices. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you. Hopefully, next month's issue of the *Village* will also be delayed when two feet of snow is dumped over the region, canceling schools for a week.

Though a new member has joined the *Village* team, the already existing members are still working their hardest to make the *Village* a success. Lori Blickley, who was unable to contribute *The Bear Facts* last month because of a malfunctioning computer, has returned this month with another installment of the series that details news and upcoming happenings at Upper Moreland High School. Amanda Dilks (a.k.a. "awesomeamanda"), who came through at the last minute to save last month's issue after one of our editors had procrastinated, has also contributed again this month. Be sure to visit our website to submit comments to our editors to help them improve their work or to let them know their help is appreciated.

We still have an opening for a Willow Grove news editor. Though we made this plea last month for some assistance in this area, we have received no replies. Anyone who would be willing to take on this task would be asked to contribute several articles (1-2 pages each month) to the *Village,* detailing happenings in the Willow Grove area. Though this job does not require more than one hour of work each month, it would greatly expand our audience for the Neighborhood News. If you are interested, let us know by our website or by dropping us a note in our mailbox. Anyone who contributes will receive free issues of the *Village* for as long as it is in existence and recognition from a growing base of over 110 readers!

Unfortunately, though we sent out over 100 survey forms last month to readers in hopes of receiving some feedback, only three were returned to us over the two month-break. Because of this poor turnout, we regret that we will be unable to convey the results to you. In light of this fact, we are now considering canceling the *1999: Best Article of the Year* voting that was scheduled to be held next month. If you did not submit a survey, you can still submit comments at any time by visiting the comment form on the *Village* webpages.

That's all for this month. Be sure to check out the puzzle page and let us know what you think! Start at the left side of the maze and see if you can make it to the opening at the right! Enjoy this issue of the *Village*, and we hope you'll keep reading in March!

Acknowledgments

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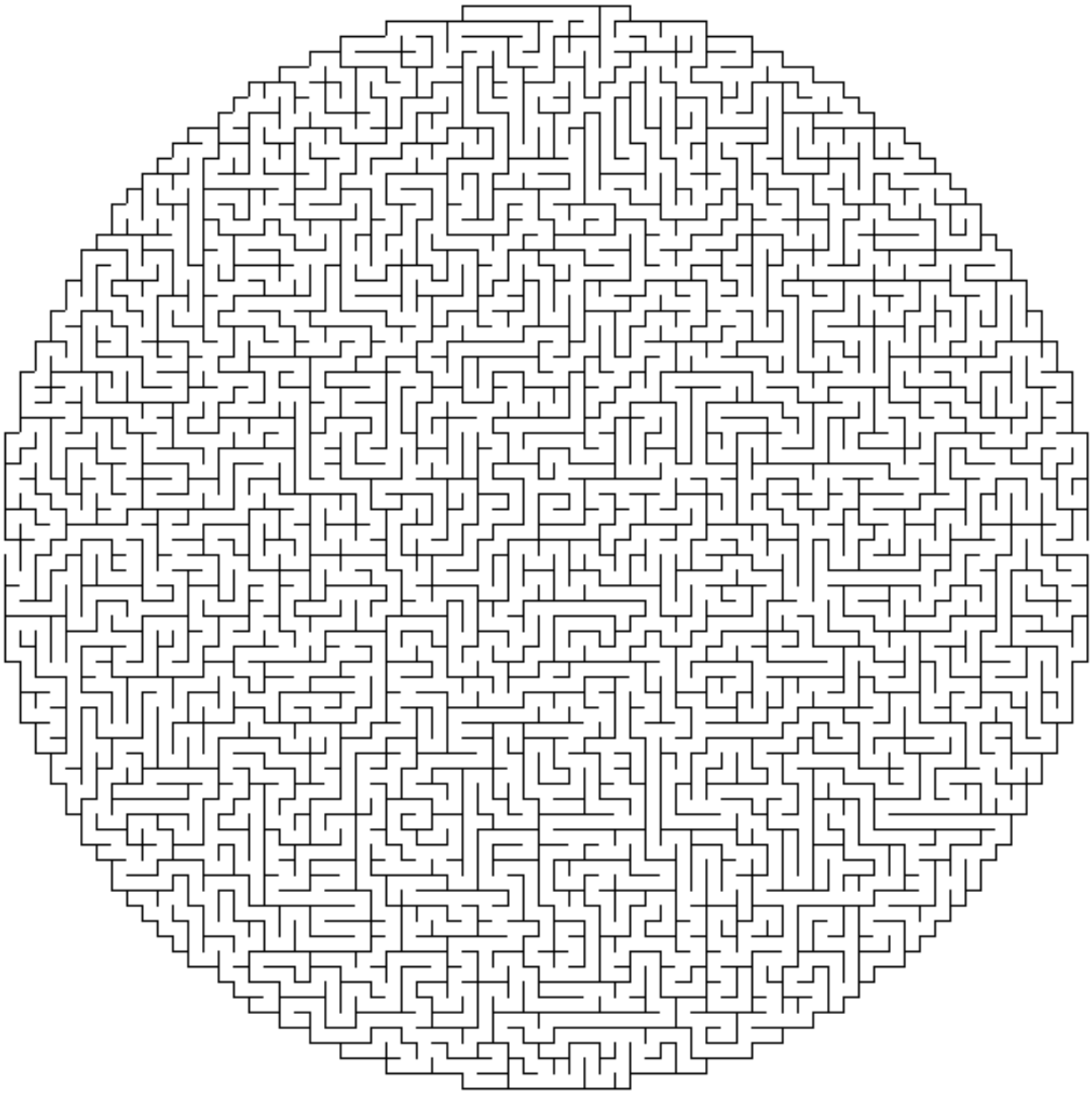
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The March issue of Shoemaker Village will be published on Friday, February 25, 2000.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Tuesday, February 22, 2000.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
March 2000: How much of an effect does being raised in a religious family have on children as they grow older?

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Puzzle Page



Neighborhood News

February 2000

THE HOLIDAYS IN REVIEW

Christmas in the neighborhood was, as usual, a memorable event, though many of the traditions that have been honored in past years have quietly vanished.

The Schrope family decorated their house with an enormous Christmas light display from December 13 to January 1. Fortunately, there were no accidents or reports of theft throughout the entire season. As you may recall, the Schrope family had had to battle thieves who vandalized their display and stole some of their Disney figures last year.

Though traffic was congested in the area during the three weeks when the display was lit, many neighbors had an accepting attitude. Even Henry Sokolowski, who became frustrated at people pulling into his driveway to make U-turns, was in good humor in regards to the status of the display.

Others, however, complained of the excess traffic and danger of accidents. "Doesn't it get annoying having to put up with that noise?" asked one subscriber who lives in the neighborhood.

For the 1999 display, however, a police regulation was enforced requiring that no cars park on the side of the street where the lights were on display. "Temporary police regulation" signs lined the opposite side of the street for the weeks while the display was showing. Many cars, however, showing no concern for the welfare of others, simply parked their cars on the side of the road adjacent to Butternut Drive, where there were no such regulations. This angered many neighbors.

On Friday and Saturday, December 19 and 20, a helper from the display stood at the Butternut-Pioneer intersection to direct traffic as parents brought their children to see Santa Claus, who was visiting the Schrope residence. At times during those two nights, as many as 25 cars lined Pioneer Road and both sides of Butternut Drive all the way down to the Simms' house in order to gain admission.

Though snow had been predicted in advance of the Christmas holiday, the forecast was later changed, dashing the hopes of those who would wish for snow on Christmas day.

MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD GO WELL

Though the neighborhood millennium party went well, forecasters of a Y2K doomsday were thwarted as the world did not end on January 1, 2000. Just as the world's celebrations went without a hitch, festivities in the neighborhood turned out just as planned.

Throughout the month of December, the neighborhood millennium party suffered numerous setbacks, until eventually, there were only six families remaining. Though the party did not turn out as it had been originally planned, the celebration was enjoyed by those who were involved.

Around the rest of the neighborhood, several houses set off fireworks at midnight. "Somebody's going to get hurt doing that," commented a neighbor, standing at the intersection of Butternut Drive and Acorn Place after the clock struck midnight.

"Now that this party's over," one neighbor said, "we can get ready for the coming of the real millennium next year!"

MILDEST WINTER IN YEARS TURNS TO DANGEROUS COLD STREAK

What forecasters had predicted to be a mild winter has been anything but in the past weeks, with heavy snow and temperatures dipping down to the zero degree mark.

The La Niña phenomenon, which last year had also created a situation leading to a mild winter with little snow, had originally been expected to create the same conditions again for the 1999-2000

winter season.

During the week of January 17, temperatures stayed well below freezing during the day, while dipping down to near zero during the nights. 4.25 inches of snow fell on Thursday, January 20, closing schools the next day due to the inclement weather.

While some residents scoff at the thought of snow, children who have grown up in the neighborhood being unable to make a snowman or build an igloo since 1997 were overjoyed.

To make things better, the cold air is not expected to depart any time soon, and the snowy conditions will most likely linger into the next few weeks, with the possibility of a blizzard to postpone publication.

In an average Philadelphia winter, the region receives 22.4 inches of snow. The current storm deposited only 2.5 inches of snow at the airport, less than a tenth of that which falls in a normal winter.

We'll keep you updated on further weather developments as they occur.

The Bear Facts

by Lori Blickley

Finally the semester is coming to an end! This means that half the year is already over. It is now the winter sports season and many sports, including basketball, bowling, indoor track, wrestling, chess, swimming, and diving, are in full swing. They already have had many practices and matches and have many more to go.

When talking to a member of the girls track team, I ask her how her season is going. She responds, "We train hard everyday after school until approximately 4:00pm.. The distance runners run about 2-5 miles a day and it is hard work. Our meets are Friday nights at Kutztown or Lehigh University where we compete against 30 or more different schools." Next I asked about the boys track team. She says, "They are doing very well, winning a lot of medals."

A freshman on the varsity wrestling squad tells about his sport. He says, "We practice hard everyday after school until 6:00pm.. Practices are tough and we are even encouraged to lift three days a week before school. Dedication is a key factor. Certain members of our squad are performing really well. Pat and Collin Cissne are so far undefeated."

As for the performing arts, musical tryouts are now in session. The musical this year is called Anything Goes. Many kids tried out and are still waiting to see if they made it. Band and choir just recently had their winter concert. My friend was there and she tells me, "Something interesting happened at the concert. I went to the concert at school to see everyone perform, and in the middle of a choir song, the fire alarm goes off. No one really knew what to do, so we all went outside. Pretty soon a police car pulls up, lights and sirens, and the policeman goes inside and starts checking things out on the stage. A couple minutes later a fire truck came, and all the firemen started checking out the building. Pretty soon they figured out it was safe, so we went back in and they finished the concert. Very interesting."

Key Club has many activities coming up. On January 23rd the club is going on a ski trip for IDD (Iodine Deficiency Disorder). They are raising money for this disorder. In February, they will be holding a Valentine's Day dance for Special Olympians. These kids come and have loads of fun. Key Club Convention is in March in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Regarding Class Council, the Juniors will be having a candy sale at the end of February. They are also having a ski trip on February 5th at Blue Mountain. On February 10th, there will be a student-parent meeting in which a Jr. Prom theme will be chosen. Parents will be helping out this year with formal decorations. The two themes being debated at the January 18th class meeting were A Trip around the World and A Walk in the Park.

Well, that is all for this month. I hope everyone has a safe February and is careful when driving in snow.

Humor from the Village Square

DISORDER IN THE COURT

These are things people actually said in court, word for word:

Q: What is your date of birth?
A: July fifteenth.
Q: What year?
A: Every year.

Q: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?
A: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

Q: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?
A: Yes.
Q: And in what ways does it affect your memory?
A: I forget.
Q: You forget. Can you give us an example of something that you've forgotten?

Q: How old is your son, the one living with you.
A: Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which.
Q: How long has he lived with you?
A: Forty-five years.

Q: What was the first thing your husband said to you when he woke that morning?
A: He said, "Where am I, Cathy?"
Q: And why did that upset you?
A: My name is Susan.

Q: And where was the location of the accident?
A: Approximately milepost 499.
Q: And where is milepost 499?
A: Probably between milepost 498 and 500.

Q: Sir, what is your IQ?
A: Well, I can see pretty well, I think.

Q: Did you blow your horn or anything?
A: After the accident?

Q: Before the accident.
A: Sure, I played for ten years. I even went to school for it.

Q: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo or the occult?
A: We both do.
Q: Voodoo?
A: We do.
Q: You do?
A: Yes, voodoo.

Q: Trooper, when you stopped the defendant, were your red and blue lights flashing?
A: Yes.
Q: Did the defendant say anything when she got out of her car?
A: Yes, sir.
Q: What did she say?
A: What disco am I at?

Q: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next
morning?

Q: The youngest son, the twenty-year old, how old is he?

Q: Were you present when your picture was taken?

Q: So the date of conception (of the baby) was August 8th?
A: Yes.
Q: And what were you doing at that time?

Q: She had three children, right?
A: Yes.
Q: How many were boys?
A: None.
Q: Were there any girls?

Q: You say the stairs went down to the basement?
A: Yes.
Q: And these stairs, did they go up also?

Q: How was your first marriage terminated?

A: By death.
Q: And by whose death was it terminated?

Q: Can you describe the individual?
A: He was about medium height and had a beard.
Q: Was this a male or a female?

Q: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?
A: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

Q: Doctor, how many autopsies have you performed on dead people?
A: All my autopsies are performed on dead people.

Q: All your responses must be oral, OK? What school did you go to?
A: Oral.

Q: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?
A: The autopsy started around 8:30 p.m.
Q: And Mr. Dennington was dead at the time?
A: No, he was sitting on the table wondering why I was doing an autopsy.

Q: Are you qualified to give a urine sample?

Q: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?
A: No.
Q: Did you check for blood pressure?
A: No.
Q: Did you check for breathing?
A: No.
Q: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?
A: No.
Q: How can you be so sure, Doctor?
A: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.
Q: But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?
A: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere.

HISTORY OF THE WORLD (part II)

The greatest writer of the Renaissance was William Shakespear. Shakespear never made much money and is famous only because of his plays. He lived at Windsor with his merry wives, writing tragedies, comedies, and errors. In one of Shakespear's famous plays, Hamlet rations out his situation by relieving himself in a long soliloquy. In another, Lady Macbeth tries to convince Macbeth to kill the King by attacking his manhood. Romeo and Juliet are an example of a heroic couplet.

Writing at the same time as Shakespear was Miguel Cervantes. He wrote 'Donkey Hotel.' The next great author was John Milton. Milton wrote 'Paradise Lost.' Then his wife died and he wrote 'Paradise Regained.'

During the Renaissance America began. Christopher Columbus was a great navigator who discovered America while cursing about the Atlantic. His ships were called the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Fe. Later the Pilgrims crossed the Ocean, and this is known as Pilgrims Progress. When they landed at Plymouth Rock, they were greeted by the Indians, who came down the hill rolling their war hoops before them. The Indian squaws carried porpoises on their backs. Many of the Indian heroes were killed along with their cabooses, which proved very fatal to them. The winter of 1620 was a hard one for the settlers. Many people died and many babies were born. Captain John Smith was responsible for all this.

One of the causes of the Revolutionary War was the English put tacks on their tea. Also, the colonists would send their parcels through the
post without stamps. During the War, the Red Coats and Paul Revere were throwing balls over stone walls. The dogs were barking and the peacocks crowing. Finally, the colonists won the War and no longer had to pay for taxis.

Delegates from the original thirteen states formed the Contented Congress. Thomas Jefferson, a Virgin, and Benjamin Franklin were two singers of the Declaration of Independence. Franklin had gone to Boston carrying all his clothes in his pocket and a loaf of bread under each arm. He invented electricity by rubbing cats backward and

declared, 'A horses divided against itself cannot stand.' Franklin died in 1790 and is still dead.

George Washington married Martha Curtis and in due time became the Father of Our Country. Then the Constitution of the United States was adopted to secure domestic hostility. Under the Constitution the people enjoyed the right to keep bare arms.

Abraham Lincoln became America's greatest Precedent. Lincoln's mother died in infancy, and he was born in a log cabin which he built with his own hands. When Lincoln was President, he wore only a tall silk hat. He said, 'In onion there is strength.' Abraham Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address while traveling from Washington to Gettysburg on the back of an envelope. He also freed the slaves by signing the Emasculation Proclamation, and the Fourteenth Amendment gave the ex-Negroes citizenship but the Clue Clux Clan would torcher and lynch the ex-Negroes and other innocent victims. It claimed it represented law and odor. On the night of April 14, 1865, Lincoln went to the theater and got shot in his seat by one of the actors in the moving pictureshow. The believed assinator was John Wilkes Booth, a supposingly insane actor. This ruined Booth's career.

Meanwhile in Europe, the enlightenment was a reasonable time. Voltaire invented electricity and also wrote a book called 'Candy.' Gravity was invented by Isaac Walton. It is chiefly noticeable in the Autumn, when the apples are falling off the trees.

Bach was the most famous composer in the world, and so was Handel. Handel was half German, half Italian, and half English. He was very large. Bach died from 1750 to the present. Beethoven wrote music even though he was deaf. He was so deaf he wrote loud music. He took long walks in the forest even when everyone was calling for him. Beethoven expired in 1827 and later died for this.

France was in a very serious state. The French Revolution was accomplished before it happened. The Marseillaise was the theme song of the French Revolution, and it catapulted into Napoleon. During the Napoleonic Wars, the crowned heads of Europe were trembling in their shoes. Then the Spanish gorillas came down from the hills and nipped at Napoleon's flanks. Napoleon became ill with bladder problems and was very tense and unrestrained. He wanted an heir to inherit his power, but since Josephine was a baroness, she couldn't bear children.

The sun never set on the British Empire because the British Empire is in the East and the sun sets in the West. Queen Victoria was the longest queen. She sat on a thorn for 63 years. Her reclining years and finally the end of her life were exemplatory of a great personality. Her death was the final event which ended her reign.

The nineteenth century was a time of many great inventions and thoughts. The invention of the steamboat caused a network of rivers to spring up. Cyrus McCormick invented the McCormick raper, which did the work of a hundred men. Samuel Morse invented a code of telepathy. Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for rabbis. Charles Darwin was a naturalist who wrote the 'Organ of the Species.' Madam Curie discovered Radium, and Karl Marx became one of the Marx brothers.

The First World War, caused by the assignation of the Arch-Duck by a surf, ushered in a new error in the anals of human history.

MEDIEVAL MATH

There were three Medieval kingdoms along the shoreline of a lake. There was an island in the middle of the lake, which the kingdoms had been fighting over for years. Finally, the three kings decided that they would send their knights out to do battle, and the winner would keep the island.

The night before the battle, the knights and their squires pitched camps and readied themselves for the fight. The first kingdom had 12 knights, and each knight had 5 squires, all of whom were busily polishing armor, brushing horses, and cooking food. The second kingdom had 20 knights, and each knight had 10 squires. Everyone at that camp was also busy preparing for battle. At the camp of the third kingdom, there was only one knight and his squire. This squire took a large pot and hung it from a looped rope high in a tall tree. He busied himself preparing the meal while the knight

polished his own armor.

When the hour of the battle came, the three kingdoms sent their squires out to fight (this was considered too trivial a matter for the knights to risk life and limb). The battle raged, and when the dust cleared, the lone squire from the third kingdom stood alone, having defeated the last remaining squire from the other two kingdoms.

This proves that the squire of the high pot and noose is equal to the sum of the squires of the other two sides.

MOVIE FOOD

I've always ordered beverages one simple way:

"A Coke, please."

Lately, though, this hasn't seemed to work. Servers now often respond,

"I'm sorry, we don't have Coke. We have Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, Mountain Dew, Diet Mountain Dew, Mr. Pibb."

Tired of listening to the long list of soft drinks, I thought I'd make life easier. So one day I simply asked the snack bar clerk at a movie theater for a "dark, carbonated beverage."

The young man behind the counter chuckled and asked, "Sir, would you like a cylindrical plastic sucking device with that?"

THE EFFICIENCY EXPERT

An efficiency expert concluded his lecture with a note of caution. "You don't want to try these techniques at home."

"Why not?" asked somebody from the audience.

"I watched my wife's routine at breakfast for years," the expert explained. "She made lots of trips between the fridge, stove, table and cabinets, often carrying a single item at a time. One day I told her, "You're wasting too much time. Why don't you try carrying several things at once?"

"Did it save time?" the guy in the audience asked.

"Actually, yes," replied the expert. "It used to take her 20 minutes to make breakfast. Now I do it in ten."

TEST FOR PROFESSIONALS

The following small quiz consists of 4 questions; it tells whether you are qualified to be a professional.

According to statistics of Andersen Worldwide, around 90% of the professionals failed the exam. Scroll down for the answers.

The questions are not that difficult. You just need to be a bit...

1. How do you put a giraffe into a refrigerator?

The correct answer is : open the refrigerator, put in the giraffe and close the door.

This question tests whether you are doing simple things in a complicated way.

2. How do you put an elephant into a refrigerator?

Wrong Answer: open the refrigerator, put in the elephant and close the refrigerator

Correct Answer: open the refrigerator, take out the giraffe, put in the elephant and close the door.

This tests your prudence.

3. The Lion King is hosting an animal conference. All the animals attend except one. Which animal does not attend?

Correct Answer: The Elephant! . . . still in the refrigerator!

This tests whether you have comprehensive thinking.

OK, if you did not answer the last three questions correctly, this one may be your last chance to test your qualification to be a professional.

4. There is a river, which is lived in by crocodiles. How do you manage to cross it?

Correct Answer: Simply swim through it. All the Crocodiles are attending the Animal Meeting!

I hope you got this one correct!

Still a Long Way to Go

When the topic for this month's Discussion Forum was decided, I knew immediately what my answer to this month's question would be: the environment is definitely in better shape than it was in the past few decades. Technological advances and other improvements have aided the world in cleaning up the state of the environment. However, there is still a long way to go.

Early in January, during the big thaw, so-called "experts" were quick to blame the warm weather on global warming and to make doomsday predictions about the state of things to come. Now, however, after twice the average January snowfall has fallen along most of the east coast, along with the biggest single snowfall ever in North Carolina, these experts have retreated into their shadow of failed predictions. Of course, they could all be right, in which case this snowstorm was a fluke and the Earth is going to warm up so rapidly that half the planet will be underwater in 30 years. Or, as they would not like you to believe, the warm spell over the past two years was the abnormalcy, and the condition of the environment is improving.

Regardless, the overall amount of the pollution we as a race are emitting into the environment has drastically decreased since the 1970s. Earth Day was started in 1971. When the first Earth Day was held, people lined the streets in Washington to support change in laws and to encourage people to change their ways. Now, in 2000, with the 29th anniversary of the event approaching in little over two months, Earth Day passes by virtually without a remark on the morning announcements. Does this mean that the state of the environment is getting better? Of course. But if people become lax about preserving the environment, the problems will recur.

What makes today's problems different than those of fifty years ago is that the younger generation today will eventually be forced to deal with the effects of their predecessors' maltreatment *in their lifetime*. Whereas the Baby Boomer generation was concerned about preserving the Earth for future generations, their children may very well live to see the consequences.

While I was surfing the Internet on Millennium Eve, I came across an article that made predictions for the future. Many scientists agreed that a child today could, with rapidly advancing technology, live to be as old as 120 years, into the 22nd century. However, the article also predicted that global warming would make many of the planet's coastal cities uninhabitable by 2050. Oil reserves are predicted to be depleted, at the current rate of use, by as early as 2070. Even if these scientists predictions do not come true, today's children may very well live to see these events if nothing is done to prevent them now.

However, the Earth is not in dire circumstances right now. There has been little or no proven evidence of global warming, and factories that destroyed local ecosystems with reckless disregard for the hazardous waste they produced are a thing of the past due to more recent environmental laws. Though a lot has been accomplished in the past, the citizens of humanity must work together in accomplishing their goal of cleaning up the environment.

Is the Environment in Better Shape Today Than It Was Twenty Years Ago?

So it's the year 2000. It's the new decade, century, and millennium. Actually, it's not the new anything. That doesn't happen till next year, but no one cares about that now. So for the sake of argument, I'll pretend that this year is the start of the new decade, century, and millennium. One thing that you can't argue with (unless you can't subtract) is that twenty years ago, the year was 1980. I wasn't alive yet, and probably none of the people writing articles for the discussion forum were either. Since I wasn't alive, I can't tell you what state the environment was in then, but I can tell you what I have learned. Almost everyone thought that the environment was doing OK. Not too many people were worried about it. And since they weren't concerned, they didn't see any reason to try to be concerned. They didn't check to see if they were polluting the air or the water. They assumed they weren't doing anything wrong.

Then, in the nineties, environmentalists started spouting about how we were pumping industrial waste into rivers and lakes. They warned us that our cars were spewing toxic gases into the air. Our growing needs for space were forcing animals onto endangered species lists. We were chopping down the rainforests at staggering rates. This all sounds pretty bad.

In response to all these problems, we started creating programs and doing things to improve the quality of the environment. We enacted laws against dumping waste into water ways. We limited the amount of rainforest that could be leveled. We bred animals on the endangered lists to bring their numbers back up. And most recently, we pay lots of money to have our cars inspected for emissions of toxic fumes.

Despite all the problems and all the improvements of the environment, I think the state of the environment is about the same, if not better, as it was twenty years ago. In 1980 we didn't see any problems that needed fixing, but problems still existed. Since we couldn't see them to fix them, they went undetected and only got worse. Environmental problems have been piling up since man first appeared. Finally in the nineties, we recognized those problems and began to fix them. Some of them are fixed completely, so those

parts of the environment are certainly better than before. The other problems are on the road to recovery, so the environment is getting better. Since we are conscious of the problems now and how to fix and prevent them, things can only get better.

Environment: Better or Worse?

I believe that the environment is in a better state than it was twenty years ago. Sure, trash is still piling up and landfills can't hold all of it, but there is one aspect of the environment that has really improved - recycling. People all around the country and all around the world are recycling newspapers, aluminum cans, bottles, and much more. Instead of throwing all of this stuff away, it is being used again. The *Shoemaker Village* you are reading right now may have been printed on recycled newspaper. The newspaper you are reading today may have been used to print a newspaper just a couple of weeks ago. You may be holding the same paper you were holding just a few weeks ago and not even know it.

Even though it may not look like it, people are trying to preserve and protect the only environment we have. There are more cars on the road and therefore there is more auto pollution, but more people are car pooling to work or school, are using public transportation, or walking someplace to get good exercise. Everyday when I walk home from school, I don't see one person in one car, I see four or five people in one car going home together. Sure the music might be so loud the people in Hatboro can hear it and the back bumper might be sagging really low to the ground, but people both young and old do care about the environment.

Twenty years ago, we did not have the technological advancements we do today. Therefore, the state of our environment is much better than it was back in the days of Richard Nixon and disco music. (How's that for a combination?) Twenty years from now, the state of the environment should be a whole lot better.

The New UMHS Finals Schedule

A few weeks ago, Mr. Daher (the Principal) and Mr. Randolph (the disciplinarian) visited English classes to discuss various topics, such as discipline problems at Upper Moreland High School. At one point, a session was held for students to voice their opinions on the school's policies. When the topic of final exams came up, the entire class erupted in protest of the new final exam schedule. It seems that everyone I talk to is against the new schedule for one reason or another.

Overall, however, the new finals schedule benefits everyone. In previous years, a major concern of teachers was that students were assigned four finals in one day. Even when three were assigned on one day, it was still troublesome for the student to prepare thoroughly for the exams. Though many attempts were made to somehow balance the schedule so that it would be fair to everyone, this proved futile.

With the new schedule, everyone has two finals on each day, therefore alleviating much of the pressure of preparations for exams. Another problem in the past was transportation. The old finals schedule was terrible in that, if you had no exam during sixth period, those who were unable to drive would be forced to linger around the school for an hour and a half until the buses arrived. To make things worse, the library closed its doors at the end of the lunch periods, making these students wander the halls with nothing to do. Obviously, some caused trouble. Getting to school in the morning was also a problem. With the current plan, though, anyone can simply take the bus into school in the morning and return at 11:00 to study for the next day. All of these problems are easily solved by the new schedule.

Some complain that the program is not fair because those who have an exam for a subject on the second day have more time to get ready than those who have it on the first. This excuse shouldn't even be considered. If you procrastinate until the last day of class to begin studying for your finals, of course you will have problems absorbing all the information in time. Others say that people who see the test on the first day can remember the questions and relay them to those who are still to take the test. This is also not a problem

because teachers were specifically instructed to not give the same test on both days. This new schedule also allows students a much-needed one and a half day break from homework between semesters.

The new final exam schedule benefits everyone, no matter which way you look at it. Hopefully, this schedule will be used for many years.

Evan's Quest

by Daniel Burgess

Chapter 1 - Evan

"There's one, father!" shouted Evan to Isaac.

"Where? Oh yes, I see it. You can have this one, son!" he replied while slowly walking toward his son, so as not to make a sound.

The afternoon sun was beaming through the tall branches and rays of golden light fell onto the leaf- filled floor.

Evan lifted his wooden bow and placed the arrow onto it. His movements were slow and precise as though he wanted to get every detail correct. The white-feathered end knocked against his arm and the arrow fell to the ground with a loud crunch as it hit the brown leaves. The deer looked around from hearing the sound. Evan and Isaac stood totally still so that the deer did not see them. The deer continued on, having inspected the area. It looked at the ground as though looking for food.

"Never mind, son. Have another try," Isaac whispered over to Evan who was standing about a metre away from him. Upon hearing these words, Evan slowly bent down and picked up the long wooden arrow.

Once again he set up his bow. This time he did it more carefully. He looked down the shaft of the arrow at the helpless deer. He pulled back the tight string as far as it would go until his fingers went numb. When he released, there was a satisfying twang and the arrow flew perfectly through the air.

Evan's heart was beating faster and faster, as it would be his first kill. But the deer jumped with fright and bounded off into the deep forest and the arrow fell to the ground with a tormenting thump.

"It doesn't matter, son. You did well. One day you'll get one," Isaac said reassuringly and put his arm around Evan.

"Anyway, let's go and get some supper before it gets cold."

They both walked off into the woods, toward their home. Evan was down hearted, but he was also hungry.

When they arrived near their home, they picked up the pace a bit as they could smell food.
"That smells nice, doesn't it, son?" Isaac said to Evan as they walked over the hill. The sun was just setting on the horizon and the sky was turning a bright orange. The day's warmth was just coming to a close as they reached the house.

The house was on its own in the clearing, the nearest town about a mile away. The house was a small cottage with a yellow thatched roof and a small wooden cow shed next to it. The windows were wooden with green shutters. These were open when Evan and Isaac were walking past. Evan looked inside and saw the glowing log fire in the corner. Isaac went inside and Evan went round to the cow shed.

"I'll be in, in a minute, father," Evan shouted back.

When Evan reached Adela, the cow, he stood next to the wooden fence and leaned on it. Adela slowly walked up to him and put her head next to his shoulder. Evan started to talk to her.

"Oh, Adela. When am I ever going to get my first kill. I let my father down today. I know I did. He wouldn't show it but he was expecting me to get that deer," Evan said in a soft voice. Evan always talked to Adela. He used to tell all his secrets and worries to her.

"Next time, I'll get that deer. I'll prove to my father that I can hunt."

Inside the house, Chloe was just serving the supper. Chloe was not Evan's mother. His mother had

died when he was small. Evan came through the door and sat down at the table.

"Hello, Evan," Chloe said in a sweet, soft voice.

"Hello, Chloe," Evan replied.

"Your father has been telling me that you nearly got a deer today," she said questioningly as though wanting an answer.

"Yes, but it ran off," Evan responded in a glum voice.

"Don't worry, son. You'll get one of those deer," Isaac assured him. He was sitting at the other side of the table, reading a letter he had received that morning. As Isaac read the letter, Evan stared at the yellow tinged parchment.

"Oh, no!" Isaac said in a deep, slow voice.

"What is it, father?" Evan inquired.

"The royal guards are inspecting all homes in the area!" answered Isaac to his son.

"What ever for?" Chloe said.

"The letter says that there has been a thief in the kings castle. They are searching for the stolen belongings," Isaac said while reading.

"What was stolen? Was it valuable?" Evan asked, intrigued.

"It doesn't say. All it says is that the inspections will be some time next week."

"Oh well, we've got nothing to hide," Chloe said reassuringly.

No one in the room said anything else and started to eat their supper.

That night Evan had dreams about the thief in the castle. Then his dreams moved onto hunting and that deer he missed. At that moment he suddenly awoke. It was still nightfall. Evan couldn't get back to sleep and he still had that deer in his mind.

He decided to go outside and see Adela. When he got outside in the dark and cold, he realized that it was a bit of an idiotic thing to do, to come out in the middle of the night. But since he was out there, he might as well stay. Adela was asleep anyway. He climbed up and sat on the hard, wooden, cowshed fence. He stared up at the glimmering stars on the black setting of the night sky. His neck started to ache so he put his head down and looked behind him at Adela lying on the hay bed.

At that moment he started getting ideas as the cool breeze blew through his hair and round his neck. He planned it all out. He must have been out in the night for well over an hour. His plan was to come out tomorrow night and hunt that deer. That would prove to his father that he could do it.

He went back to bed that night and fell straight to sleep.

The next morning Chloe, Isaac and Evan were sitting at the table eating their breakfast.

"I need you to go into town for me, Evan," Isaac said directly to Evan.

"Okay. Why?" Evan asked his father.

"Oh, we just need some supplies," Isaac told his son. Evan just nodded and carried on eating.

Evan set off from the house early.

"Bye, Evan. Be careful!" Chloe shouted to him.

"I will. Don't worry," Evan shouted back.

"And don't go near that castle, you know, with all that thieving going on."

Evan was walking at quite a pace, looking around at the countryside as he did. Evan only saw one person, an old man, go past him.

Evan was thinking about the castle all the way, the temptation of the words Chloe said to him before

he left. When he reached the town, he stopped and sat on a wall as his legs were hurting quite a bit. He looked at the people around him. There was a market going on in the village centre. There were many stalls and entertainers. The streets were filled with bustling people getting on with their lives.

One man walking nearby was selling hot pies. Another woman was selling roses. There was a jester running around, and many people near by him were laughing. The jester ran up to Evan and started doing a ridiculous dance. Evan knew it was daft but he couldn't help but laugh to himself.

Evan got off the wall and started getting the things on his father's list. One of things was some pies for their supper tonight. Evan looked around for the pie merchant he had seen before but couldn't see him. Then he heard the bellowing.

"Pies for sale, cheap and tasty, come and get your pies!"

The shouting was coming from around the corner. Evan walked round and saw the pie man. He bought three pies and walked off down the road to look at some more of the stalls.

Evan spent quite a while buying things. Then he needed a rest. He found a shop named "Magic & Wizardry". This intrigued him so he went in.

The shopkeeper was an old man, with white hair and glasses. As Evan walked through the old, woodworm ridden door, there was a musty, stale atmosphere.

"Hello, my young fellow!" the shopkeeper said in a loud, cheerful voice.

"Oh, hello. I'm just looking, thank you," Evan said in a panicky voice.

Telling that Evan was a bit afraid from his voice, the shopkeeper replied, "Don't be afraid! I won't bite. Look around all you want. Just shout me when you want something."

Evan was reassured by the merry voice of the old man. "Okay, thanks!" Evan said and the old man went off into the back of the shop.

The store was amazing, and Evan was astounded by all the books and potions. He knew that all this was just fairy tale stuff, but it was fun to think that there was magic in this shop. Feeling a bit more confident, Evan shouted back the shopkeeper.

"Erm, Sir!" Evan said in a loud voice.

The old man came out and said, "Yes, my good friend. Am I to believe that you need some assistance?"

Evan was a bit bewildered at how cheerful and happy this old man was. But he eventually said, "Yes, I was just wondering if all this stuff is real?"

"Ah, I see. Yes, it is all truly magic!" the old man replied.

Evan looked a bit unsure. At seeing this, the shopkeeper said, "Hmm, I'll have to convince you in some way. Come with me."

Evan was getting quite excited now, at what the old man was going to do! The shopkeeper, while picking a few books off the shelf, said, "Oh, yes. I never asked you. What is your name, my good chap?"

"Evan, sir, and yours?" Evan asked, getting quite friendly now.

"Oh, hello, Evansir. My name is Elgan!" Evan smiled at Elgan's joke. Elgan picked one last jar off the shelf and with armfuls of stuff he said, "Come this way, Evan!" Elgan walked round the back and Evan followed.

The room at the back of the shop was amazing! There were paintings all over the wall, and Elgan's bed was in the corner. There was no window and it was quite dark, which made the room more mysterious. Elgan walked over to what looked like a workbench. He placed all the things on the work top. Evan was just standing in the doorway so Elgan said, "Come on in, Evan!"

Evan walked over to the workbench. Elgan opened a large book, flicked through a page or two and then said, “It’s dark in here, isn’t it? Let’s have some light.”

Elgan opened a jar which contained a green liquid. As he took the lid off, Evan could smell a horrid stench. Elgan started to say some weird words, something like, “Elgarot, Putoron and mirkforth. Light of the flame, bright of the fire, let there be light, let there be fire!” Elgan swung his arms around in the air, in a criss-cross movement.

Suddenly there was a flash and a flame appeared on Elgan’s hand. “Arrgh!” shouted Evan. “Do not worry, Evan. It doesn’t hurt!” Elgan reassured him. Then Elgan threw the flame. It landed on a candlewick, which was sitting on the workbench.

“That’s amazing!” Evan said, confused.

“Now do you believe magic is real?” Elgan asked Evan.

“Absolutely!” Evan answered. “But I have to go now!”

“Thanks for believing, Evan. Bye,” Elgan said to him as he was heading to the door.

“Thank you. I’ll come again sometime!” Evan said as he opened the front door.

“Good. I hope you do!”

Evan walked through the market slowly, thinking about what had just happened. He looked up to his left and saw the castle towering overhead. The flags gently flapped in the breeze. A green moss was growing on the castle walls. If it weren’t for what had just happened and what time it was, Evan would have gone to have a look at the castle. But he had to get home.

On his way home, Evan came to the conclusion that what he had seen at Elgan’s shop was some sort of trick. He didn’t know how Elgan did it but it couldn’t have been magic!

That night Evan’s plans all went wrong as the royal guards came to inspect that night. So Evan didn’t go hunting. As they all knew, the knights didn’t find anything but left the place in a bit of a mess.

“Ill-mannered and uncivilised barbarians. They’ve left the place in a right state!” Chloe said angrily.

The next day Evan had forgotten about Elgan for the time being. He was more concerned about the night. He had decided to go hunting this night, instead. He planned it more carefully so he wouldn’t get caught sneaking out.

Everything was ready. The bow and arrow were by his bed and his clothes were set out. All he needed now was the night to come!

Evan's Quest

Chapter 2 - The Accident and the Penalty

The night came and Evan's heart was racing! The trouble was that he dare not move. He eventually got bored of just lying there, so he got up and dressed and sneaked out of the quiet, dark house. As Evan stepped out into the cool night, his heart started to beat rapidly. He slowly walked off into the darkness and didn't once look back at the barren house.

As he walked through the dark wood, he heard noises that scared him. He stepped on the crispy leaves, which made a crunching noise every time he put his foot down. Then there was a loud hoot of an owl. This unsettled Evan and he stopped in the shadows. He looked around and couldn't see far because of the darkness. The forest went silent. Evan was getting so panicky that he decided to carry on walking as the silence was scaring him even more. Evan was becoming more and more anxious so he tried to think about other things. The thought that came into his head most often was to turn back and go home to his warm bed. But he kept cancelling that idea out with the thought of that deer. He had to prove to his father that he could do it.

Evan stepped out into a clearing. The ground was dirty and there were no leaves covering it. The moonlight gleamed through the gap in the trees and cast a bright beam on the dusty ground. Evan looked around the clearing and then saw some movement behind a large bush.

Evan's heart started to race faster and faster. He lifted his bow very slowly so as not to make a mistake, and then he took an arrow and placed it on the bow. He pulled back and released. As soon as Evan let go, it was as though everything went into slow motion. The arrow glided through the air, cutting through the wind with ease. Evan's heart stopped as it flew. He wanted it to hit that deer so much.

As the arrow went straight through the bush, there was a loud howl. He had done it. But now that he had, Evan didn't feel as pleased as he had imagined he would. He had wanted to hit that deer so much, he hadn't realised that he was killing a living animal.

Evan walked sadly up to the bush and looked behind it.

"Arrgh!" Evan screamed.

"Father!" There, lying on the ground, was Isaac! The arrow was half way through his chest. The blood was pouring out onto the earth. Isaac's hand was around the end of the arrow.

"It . . . hurts, son! Help me!" Isaac managed to say.

"I'm sorry, father. I was trying to prove to you that I could hunt!" Evan sobbed. Evan knelt next to him on the floor.

"You didn't have to prove it to me, son! I knew you would do it some day. I was older than you before I got my first kill," Isaac said through the pain. "I found you weren't in your bed, and your bow was gone. I knew what you were doing."

"I'm sorry, father! I'll go get help," Evan said as he stood up and headed the way he came. Isaac was losing blood fast. He was dying and Isaac knew it.

Evan ran through the forest, not knowing where he was going. His head was spinning and he was crying. The tears were streaming down his face. Evan tripped over a log and fell flat on his face. He lay there weeping. He realised there was no hope. He had killed his father, his own flesh and blood.

Isaac lay on the ground in the cold night. Isaac was quite an old man. His hair was greying and he had a short brown beard. The arrow was really hurting him now. He tried to pull it out, but that just hurt him

more. He took one last tug as hard as he could and the arrow eased out. "Arrgh!" The pain was too much for Isaac.

Evan had decided to try one more time to find help. He was just about to give up when he saw a light up ahead. He ran faster. It was a cottage. All the lights were on and Evan could see figures through the window. He knocked on the small wooden door.

A small, old woman came to the door. "Hello, can I help you? You shouldn't be out in the cold at this time of night! Come in!" Before Evan could even say a word, she was pulling him inside.

"No! Get off me. My father is dying! Out in the wood." Evan pulled himself out of her arms.

"Oh dear. You poor thing!" the old woman said in a soft voice. Evan was realising that this was hopeless when a royal knight walked behind the old woman.

"What's this? Your father is injured? We are just about done searching here," the knight said.

"Oh, thank you!" Evan said in a relieved voice.

"Whereabouts in the forest is he?"

Evan led the three knights through the dim forest. It was becoming light as the morning sun started to rise and the rays of light shone through the openings in the branches high above them. Evan was quite surprised that he found the clearing so quickly. The four of them ran to the bush.

Isaac was now unconscious. He had been lying there for about an hour.

"Right, let's get him back to the castle!" one knight said.

"It's going to be okay, father," Evan said into Isaac's ear. The three knights picked up Isaac and started to carry him into the wood. Evan stood where he was and didn't follow them. He began to cry again.

"What have I done?" He then chased after them.

The knights carried Isaac for ages. Then they came to the edge of the forest. Evan saw the town to the left, and the castle was up ahead of them. They ran across a field up to the moat. The guards were looking through the slots at Evan and the knights.

"Open up. It's us!" one knight shouted up to the guards.

One of the guards' faces disappeared from the arrow slot. Then the giant drawbridge jolted and started to move down. Evan looked up at the tremendous castle towering over them. Almost every arrow slot had a face in it. The castle wall was scattered with them. The ground shook as the huge drawbridge hit the ground.

"Come on," one of the knights said quietly to Evan. "Your father is going to be alright," he said reassuringly. Evan looked up at his rugged face and did a faint smile.

The shiny portcullis made some clanking noises and started to move up. As the group moved over the drawbridge, Evan looked over the edge into the water. He saw that his face was streaked with the dirty marks of the tears. Then a golden fish swam through his reflection, swirling it up.

As the bunch of them walked through the entrance, Evan looked around. He had always wanted to see inside the castle, and now that he was inside, he wasn't really thinking about that.

Elegant, colourful tapestries were hanging on the wall, and every so often there would be a small shelf with some sort of vase or dish on it. They were walking down a corridor with many doors along it.

Isaac was becoming very heavy for the knights. "Let's set him down somewhere," one knight said.

"No! Keep going!" Evan said wildly.

"Hey kid. You try carrying a grown man for an hour." The knight knocked on the next door.

What look liked a servant answered the door.

"Yes, sir!" the servant said to the knight.

“We need to borrow your bed,” the knight said. The servant agreed and led the knights in. They set Isaac down on the bed and sat down. They stayed there, resting for about five minutes, until Evan said,

“Can we go now? He needs help.”

“Okay, let’s go.” They picked Isaac back up and went out into the corridor. They carried on for about five more minutes, through corridors that all looked the same to Evan, and up and down a few staircases. Eventually they came to a dead end of a corridor.

“Here we are. You better just hope that the King is in a good mood,” one knight said. This didn’t make Evan feel very good.

At the end of the corridor was a huge door which looked as though it were made from oak. It had gold strips along the edge and two silver handles on each side. The knight knocked loudly on the door.

“Enter!” a strong voice shouted from inside. They all went in. The knights placed Isaac carefully on the carpeted floor. Then the knights started to bow. Evan saw them doing this, then did the same quickly to catch up. As Evan lifted his head up, he looked at the king sitting on his throne. He was dressed in rich clothes. There were a few servants around him, and in a line from him to the King were some more servants dressed in better clothes.

“Come,” the King said to Evan. Evan walked closer to the King and knelt down.

“What is your name, son?” The king asked Evan in a soft, quiet voice.

“Sir, my name is Evan.”

“Hello, Evan. And what brings you to my castle?”

Evan looked straight into the Kings blue eyes. “Well, your majesty. My father has been involved in an accident! He is badly wounded and needs help soon,” Evan spurted out very fast.

“Okay, calm down. I’ll help you, Evan!”

Evan smiled and said, “You will? Oh thank you, sire!”

“Guard! Go get the royal sorcerer!” the King shouted in a loud voice to the guard who was standing by the door.

“But! I can’t just go giving away free magic here and there.”

“Please, sire. Our family does not have much money,” Evan said downheartedly.

“Do not worry, young Evan. You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours, as they say. If you help me, I will get the royal sorcerer to heal your father.”

As the King said these words, the door opened and Evan looked around. There standing in the doorway was a middle-aged man dressed in purple robes. The King turned his head and started to whisper to a female servant standing next to him. The sunlight from a window shone onto the Kings crown and glinted into Evans eyes.

“Evan, this is Aiesha,” said the King, pointing to the very beautiful woman standing next to him. She will take you to your quarters and explain to you your task.” Aiesha looked at Evan, smiled and nodded.“In the mean time, the royal sorcerer will freeze your father so that he will not die. If you complete your task, your father will be un- frozen and healed. If you fail, your father will be un-frozen and left to die.

Evan thought this was very unfair, but it was the only way that his father would be healed. So he headed out of the room with Aiesha and before he walked out, Evan remembered something.

“Er, your majesty?”

“Yes, Evan!” the King shouted across to him.

“Can you contact my stepmother and tell her?”

“Yes. I’ll said a messenger to tell her.”

Evan reached his quarters and looked around. The room was quite small but sufficient. There was a window, a bed, a table and one chair.

"Evan," Aiesha said to him as he was looking around.

"Yes?" Evan replied.

"Sit down and I'll tell you your task." Evan did as she said. "For many years the castle has been under attack by a dragon. This castle used to be twice the size it is now! But the fire-breathing monster destroyed it. The King has sent many a knight and warrior to fight the dragon. None have ever returned."

Evan cut her short and said, "Let me guess. My task is to defeat the dragon!"

"I am afraid so. But you only have a short time to complete this duty."

"Not a too difficult task then!" Evan said sarcastically.

Aiesha left Evan alone for a while. Evan sat on the large windowsill with his knees held up close to his chest. He stared down at the ground. He was a long way up. He glanced around the countryside, thinking about his impossible task. He looked down at the town. He could see all the people getting on with their own lives. Evan thought to himself. If warriors and knights couldn't defeat the dragon, how did he even have a chance? If the way that had always been tried was just brute force, perhaps another approach would have a better chance. But what could the other approach be? Evan suddenly saw Elgan's shop. Suddenly loads of ideas came swarming into Evan's head.

Evan ran down the corridor to a room where Isaac was being kept. He ran in through the thin wooden door. By now an hour had passed and Chloe was sitting by Isaac's bed, holding his lifeless hand. Evan ran up to Chloe and hugged her.

"I'm sorry! I didn't mean to hurt my father," Evan said in a soft, emotional voice.

"It's okay, dear. I'm sure it was an accident! But you have to complete the King's task," Chloe replied.

"It's okay. I have an idea that may help my father."

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 10

"Everyone out of the way," Christopher screamed, storming into action. He rushed to the front of the line and began to race at full speed to the east. The large group of trolls, headed south, continued to pound on in that direction, spurred by the revolt behind them.

The roar of the ground echoed in the knights' ears as the trolls thundered past. Behind the stampede of crazed creatures, other trolls followed, brandishing powerful weapons that appeared to be able to slice the head off of even the strongest troll. Several were killed in the initial skirmish, while the others continued the battle, moving farther and farther away from the troll installment.

During the chaos, nobody had seemed to notice Christopher and the knights attempting to vanish behind a hill that was as large as a mound of dirt. Christopher, rising from his hiding place, mounted the small protrusion and moved forward with amazing speed in an attempt to surprise any trolls who might be waiting in ambush.

When he saw that the coast was clear, he motioned for the knights to proceed. A few trolls lingered in the small valley. As the group approached, they were astonished to find Dave, whom they had presumed dead, standing in the middle of the valley, talking with trolls!

"Dave! You're alright!" Katie exclaimed as she approached where the group had gathered. The trolls' enormous lungs sent puffs of smoke billowing into the air above them, creating the illusion that an enormous army was present, when, in fact, there were only seven bodies.

Dave, though he had just seen hundreds of trolls stampede around him in a frantic attempt to escape, seemed completely at ease with the surroundings. "Hi, Christopher! I've got a lot to tell you!" Christopher looked behind him, where the remains of the warehouse now stood smouldering. Ashes blew in the fierce, cold wind. It was now beginning to snow again.

The trolls who surrounded Dave looked at the army of knights in fear. Some of the knights had similar expressions on their faces. One troll began to taunt Christopher's knights.

"Hey, hey!" Dave said, cutting in as one troll and a knight began to exchange remarks. "We're both on the same side!"

"Same side?" Christopher asked in puzzlement.

"Yes. These trolls were staging a rebellion. They hate Yavin and his leaders and want to overthrow them just as much as we do," Dave replied quickly.

One of the trolls muttered something that sounded like gibberish to Dave. He threw up his arms in confusion.

"He's talking in his native language," Chapin said. "I'll translate. He's saying that Yavin forces his group to work twenty hours a day just to stay alive." The troll continued to mumble on at an incredible pace, much faster than the humans were able to talk. The troll had to pause several times for Chapin to catch up.

"Yavin forces his people to work in this barren wasteland far away from their tribes. He uses force to get his way and kills those who oppose him." Chapin paused for a minute and glanced around with a troubled look in her eyes.

"They say that there is now someone else, more powerful than Yavin," she said quietly, but it was so silent around them that her words seemed to echo a thousand times off the mountains that surrounded the area.

There was not a sound for a minute except that of the lightly falling snow and the wind that howled

around them. Finally, after what seemed like years, Christopher spoke up. "So, our enigmatic leader does exist after all." Another pause. "Ask him if he knows who this person is," he said to Chapin.

Chapin relayed this to the troll, and the troll responded with more gibberish. Finally, she told the group, "He says nobody knows his name. It's said that to speak his name would mean certain disaster not only to the person who said it but their family and friends as well."

"This is troublesome indeed," Mike said in a grave tone similar to that of Christopher's.

"See if anyone else knows about this person," Christopher told Chapin, who passed the message on to the rest of the trolls. One voice spoke up.

"He says that the new leader has the ability to travel through time."

"Wait," Christopher said. "Ask the troll when this 'new leader' appeared."

Chapin came back a few minutes later with a startling answer. "He says only since the end of the summer."

The other four let out a murmur. "Since the end of the summer?" Christopher asked. "Are you sure?"

"That's what he says. There's no doubt about it," Chapin replied earnestly.

"Then we've already witnessed his time-traveling capabilities," Christopher said. "Twenty-five years ago, Yavin said there was someone more powerful than him. He couldn't have known that without some sort of communication between the present and the past."

"Yavin is dangerous enough to destroy the entire world," Dave said without a pause. "Who can be more powerful than him?"

"The only way we will find that out is if we're successful. If we fail, it won't matter," Christopher said.

"The trolls have agreed to help us," Dave said.

"Finally, some good news for a change," Mike said as he looked over the sizable guard of trolls standing by. There were at least a hundred of them of all ages and sizes.

Suddenly, from over the hill, there was a loud bang. Christopher shouted to one of the knights to scale the ridge to see what was going on on the other side.

Coming back panting, he reported incredulously, "You've got to come see for yourself!" Christopher ordered the knights to follow him up the hill, and the trolls also followed.

In the distance, there were several flashes just as the scene came into view. Trolls lined the horizon in two clearly divided lines that were obviously opposing sides. From their vantage point, it was impossible for the knights and friendly trolls to determine who was on their side. It was clear, however, that the "army" closest in proximity to them was losing badly. The other side was using some type of magic that was devastating.

One of the trolls shouted out, and Chapin translated. "Our friends! They're being slaughtered!" At the sound of this, the other trolls began to grow restless. A few began to rush toward the battlefield where the massacre was taking place.

"Stop where you are!" Christopher shouted to the trolls, who understood by the tone in his voice that something wasn't right. Chapin translated, and they burst into a rage, looking back and forth at Christopher and the ongoing battle with a look of hatred in their eyes.

"You're only going to get yourselves killed and possibly us as well," Christopher pleaded. Chapin must have added something to the translation, because the trolls obeyed reluctantly and returned to the group.

"Let's get out of here," Dave said in disgust. He motioned for Christopher to follow and waited for his approval. Christopher waved them on, but stayed behind, watching the battle progress. The trolls on their

side were almost defeated now. All the world would remember of their battle would be a few holes in the ground from magic and a ransacked troll stronghold, both of which would be gone soon. Christopher realized the pointlessness of the quest on which he was about to embark. If they were killed, nobody would remember them. If they survived, they would be proclaimed heroes with the highest honors.

Christopher was awakened from his stream of thought by Dave, who shouted to him from below to hurry. As he turned away from the massacre, Christopher was filled with a dread that he had never felt before, as if those who were lying on the battlefield were compelling him to not let their lives be forgotten.

Christopher hurried down from the crest of the hill to the river, where the trolls and knights were now gathered, planning their next move.

"What's wrong, Christopher?" Mike asked as Christopher, a look of dismay on his face, slowly approached.

"It's nothing," Christopher replied. "What were you talking about?"

"Well," Mike responded, "we were trying to decide whether to continue into Yavin's territory right now or not. Obviously you should make the final decision, but now that we have reinforcements, it might be best to simply continue on."

"You do have a point," Christopher considered. "But even with three hundred of us, we've no chance against Yavin. He's much more powerful than we are, even if he has less followers.

"Where would we go?" Dave asked bluntly, reinforcing Mike's point. "We'd have to backtrack all the way to Riverbend before we could find a decent-size town that will assist us in our efforts."

"Possibly not," Christopher replied. "We . . . " He was cut off by shouts approaching from the south, the direction in which the bloodbath they had just witnessed had taken place.

"We have to get away from here before they find us," Mike said.

"Agreed. Let's continue down the river until we're clear of them, and then we'll decide where to proceed." Nobody argued with this decision, and the knights cleared the area just as the troll bosses were rounding the crest of the hill behind them. Fortunately the knights went unnoticed as they vanished behind an incline.

There were no signs of pursuit, so the knights continued down the river for a few hours until they decided to take a rest. By this time, it was almost sunset, so the choice was made to sleep for the night. During the day, they had edged closer and closer to the mountains, until eventually a few minutes walk would begin the ascent to the northeast. Fortunately the river had cut a path in the foothills over the eons. It was easy for the party to walk on the snow-covered frozen river, now solid enough to support their weight. By Christopher's calculations, the date was the first of December.

By the time they arrived at a suitable location to settle down for the night, the party was well out of reach of the rampaging, battling trolls. They decided in the morning to weigh their alternatives and went to sleep without much more talk. Two knights stood guard over the camp in two-hour shifts throughout the night.

As the morning sun peeked above the horizon to the east, Christopher and Chapin rose before the rest of the knights and trolls to discuss their next move. After some debate, Mike and Dave finally awoke to join in their conversation. Katie got up just as the knights began to stir. The trolls, their rest cycles different from those of the humans, were nonetheless awakened as the others discussed their plans.

"Have you decided yet?" Katie asked as she approached the four, engaged in a heated conversation. "I'm trying to convince Christopher that we should go directly to Yavin's fortress. We're only wasting time trying to find reinforcements, when nobody may be willing to help us," Chapin said to Katie in a

persuasive voice.

"If we go that way," Christopher said, unswayed by Chapin's opinion, "we will surely be killed. At least we stand a chance to put up a fight by heading east."

"We don't even have a map," Mike said. "Traveling blindly into an unknown region inhabited by dangerous trolls and other things we can only begin to imagine is just plain idiotic. Winter is getting worse by the minute. If we don't get started on the journey . . . ."

"Calm down, Mike," Dave said, his temper flaring. "I agree it would be stupid to blaze right into Yavin's stronghold, but we should do so soon, before the winter sets in and Yavin's power strengthens."

"Yavin's power is already strong enough to kill us all," Christopher said pointedly. "We need some reinforcements. Right, Katie?"

Katie didn't know what to say. While she had originally wanted to charge into Yavin's fortress as soon as possible, it now seemed a foolhardy proposition at best.

"I agree with Christopher," Katie said, making up her mind. "It would be stupid to waste our lives in such a foolish exercise."

Mike and Dave stared at her with a look of bewilderment on their faces. "I thought you were on our side, Katie," Dave said, irritation in his voice.

"I just don't think we should do something as insane as this," Katie said.

"Now we're split two to two, with Mike half undecided," Chapin said. "So what step do we take next in this instance?"

"The option is clear," Christopher said. "We must find reinforcements. The decision to proceed must be unanimous."

"We shouldn't proceed just because you don't want us to?" Dave questioned angrily. "Why shouldn't we just go on because we can't make a decision?"

"We're talking about the safety of at least 300 lives here, possibly those of the entire world," Christopher replied. "We can't just throw away our chances on a gamble. We have to be absolutely sure we want to continue."

"We aren't . . ." Dave said. "We aren't . . . absolutely . . . sure?" Dave was now feeling lightheaded. "What's happening?" he said, struggling to regain his lost balance.

"Somebody, help him!" Christopher yelled behind his shoulder as Dave collapsed to the ground.

"We can't . . . go . . . on," he said, as he lapsed into unconsciousness.

"Kevin!" shouted a voice that seemed to be a thousand miles away. Dave's head was throbbing. He couldn't seem to find enough energy to open his eyes.

"Kevin!" the voice shouted again. "Wake up!" Dave finally was able to open his eyes. The world emerged around him in a swirl of colors. Though he could not focus clearly, he was able to determine that he was lying on the ground in a small room with a low roof.

"Good, you're finally awake," the voice continued. "Get dressed! The ceremony is about to start!"

"Where . . . where am I?" Dave asked as he struggled to stand upright. He doubted that he had just been asleep, as the pain in his head was so severe that he was unable to say more than a few words at a time before having to rest.

"You're at home, of course," the voice continued. Dave was now confident enough in his hearing and his vocal skills that he could determine the voice to be originating from a middle-aged woman.

"Come on, we've got to get to the ceremonies," she said. "I'll meet you outside in ten minutes." The

woman exited the small shack through a door that was now clearly visible in Dave's improving eyesight. When his head stopped throbbing enough for Dave to rise out of his straw bed, he looked around.

Though his vision was still hazy, Dave was able to make out a small sack in the corner of the room where a set of garments was located. He had never before seen any manner of clothing that was in any way similar to the things that were now in front of him. Still puzzled at what was going on, Dave got dressed.

After he was fully clothed, he took a look around him. "Am I dreaming?" he thought as he explored his surroundings. As he was making his way across the width of the small enclosure, he stumbled upon a sharp rock, which sent a piercing pain through his bare foot.

"Too real to be a dream," he concluded, hobbling around on his good foot. When the pain subsided, he pushed away the curtain to the entrance and exited the building.

It appeared that he was now standing at the outskirts of a small town that was cut out from the middle of a forest. Towering trees surrounded the entire area. The sky was overcast, but from the amount of light that was present, Dave could determine that it was either early morning or late evening.

"Kevin!" the same voice that Dave had heard before shouted. Dave turned toward the center of the small settlement, where the same woman whom he had seen before stood. "Hurry up, we're late!"

"Who's Kevin?" Dave asked, becoming more confused. "Who are you? Where am I?"

"Stop joking around, Kevin," the woman scolded. "We're still in Terringrama, just as you were last night. You've lived here your whole life, too long to be playing games at an important time like this." The clouds in the sky were beginning to thicken, and a cold wind started to blow.

"But . . ." Dave protested.

"Hurry!" the woman commanded. Suddenly, there was a flash of light, and Dave lost consciousness.

"Dave! Are you awake?" Dave heard Mike shouting. Someone was shaking him so hard that it was beginning to hurt.

"What's going on? Am I back?" he asked.

"Back?" Christopher replied, puzzled. "You've been here unconscious for the past half hour."

"Unconscious?" Dave asked. "But I was just in a town. Terringrama, I think I heard."

"You were probably dreaming," Chapin said.

"Dreaming? While I was unconscious?" Dave asked.

"It's possible. Anyway, the doctor over here can't figure out anything that's wrong with you," Christopher said. "All four of us have decided that it would be best to seek out reinforcements before we continue on to Yavin's fortress."

"Well, if you agree," Dave said, distracted. The fuzziness and the incessant throbbing in his head had now vanished. Unlike where he had just been, where something had just not seemed right, everything appeared to be in order.

"We're going to leave in an hour," Christopher said. "Use the time to rest, Dave."

Dave acknowledged the comment but made no motion to lie down. He felt well-rested, as if nothing had happened to him except getting a good night's sleep.

For the next hour, Dave pondered his predicament. After sixty minutes of trying to make sense of it, he realized that there was no clear answer. Though he tried to push it out of his mind, however, there was something about the experience that seemed to not want to be forgotten.

When the time arrived, the knights would set out on a journey that might or might not lead to their demise. Christopher's map extended only a hundred miles to the east of their location. After they left the area covered by the map, it might be impossible for them to maintain their bearings. Christopher retrieved one of

the rare pieces of parchment paper he had attained when the party was back in Riverbend and attempted to draw an extended map from what he could see in the area surrounding him. In the clear winter air, the visible landscape stretched for miles, allowing Christopher to add as much as possible to his localized map. He hoped that it would aid them if they were forced to backtrack, should they not find an alternate route after searching elsewhere in the mountains.

The first day's journey was uneventful. The bleak, snow-covered mountains, now almost indistinguishable from the rest of the scene, continued to stretch to their north. The days were now so short that the sun barely rose above the horizon during the day. Christopher calculated that they had two days of light left before the month and a half period of darkness began. Because of the limited darkness, the party was forced to travel in the dangerous night, amidst whatever creatures Yavin decided to send their way.

After three days of trekking to their east, darkness enveloped them. The knights and trolls had stopped at around midday that afternoon to watch the final setting of the sun. When the spectacle had ended and the night had befallen the travelers, they continued on, journeying for three more days in the pitch darkness. By this time, they were several hundred miles beyond the boundaries of Christopher's map. At times, the temperature dropped so low that the party was forced to take shelter in whatever the sparse surroundings could provide.

Shortly after this event, the small army spotted a lone shadow coming across the foothills in front of them. As the figure approached, it was difficult to be certain what type of creature it was; however, when it was close enough to see that the shadow was human, Christopher halted and waited for the person's approach.

"Greetings!" it shouted out when it was close enough. It became clear that the lone traveler was an older man, who seemed much too frail to be journeying in the harsh elements.

"Hello," Christopher shouted in a friendly reply. "Isn't it late in the year to be traveling this far north?"

"I agree fully with you," the man replied. "Unfortunately, I'm fleeing from Yavin, who has invaded several towns in the direction you're going."

"This is bad news," Christopher half mumbled to himself. "Yavin has begun his invasion of the northern towns." Turning to the man, he asked, "What state are these towns in?"

"The ones I've come across are completely destroyed," the man replied. "But the last one, the one I just came from, was still expecting an invasion. It's all quiet around there."

"How far away is this town?" Christopher inquired.

"About a week's journey at a normal pace. I made the journey in a week and a half, and that's at my old age."

"Where are you headed?"

"I'm going west to a stopover at a town named Gager. After that, I'm getting as far away south from Yavin's influence as I can."

"Are you sure you can make it?"

"I've survived this far," the old but by no means disabled man replied. "I can manage."

"Very well," Christopher said. "Thank you for the information."

"By the way," the man asked as he turned away. "Who's side are you on?" A worried look came over his face as he surveyed the trolls who were standing off to the side, silently observing.

"We're trying to defeat Yavin by any means possible," Christopher said. Seeing the man's reaction to trolls, he added, "They rebelled against him because of maltreatment."

"Very well," the man said, not sure if Christopher was telling the truth and clearly regretting his

decision to tell them anything."

After the man had departed, the companions set off in the opposite direction yet again, hoping to cover more ground before they became too tired to walk.

After progressing steadily eastward over the next seven days, the group estimated that they were less than a day away from the location of the town about which the old man had spoken. Little did they know the trouble that they were getting themselves into.