Shoemaker Village

www.shoemakervillage.org
Volume 41 - February 2001

Serving the community for almost 4 years



dwarves, magic, and other beasts

daniel burgess heightens the suspense with the latest chapter of *evan's quest*

is using napster immoral?

members of the community sound off on the legitimacy of music sharing applications

on the inside

snowstorms bury region
find out the secret of terringrama in *the knights of the square table*
amanda dilks compiles most jokes ever!



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editor's pages

information you should know

Welcome to the new millennium! Though the *Village* has encountered troubled times over the past few months, we are proud to announce that publication has resumed and should continue as normal throughout the coming months.

On December 12, 2000, I sent a letter to all *Village* subscribers detailing the reasons that were behind the cancellation. The guidance office at UMHS, for some reason or another, assigned myself, as well as other members of the *Village* staff, a difficult schedule. The incredible workload forced the publication of the *Village* to lapse over the first semester. However, the complete opposite is true in the second semester, and we hope to return to the normal publication schedule.

Much has happened since we last distributed the *Village* almost three months ago. To begin, I suggest that you take a look at the *Village* website. When the temporary adjournment of paper copy publication was announced in October, we continued to update the *Village* website with the latest news. In fact, had you checked the website prior to December 12, you might have learned of the cancellation several weeks prior to the mailing of notices.

In addition, during the month of December, the *Village* editors posted an article entitled *The Unseen* on the website, which details the lives of those persons who are not noticed by others in society. The article, once it was formally published on December 23, caused quite a controversy over its legitimacy. We encourage you to read the article and supply your views on the *Village* forum by visiting our website at http://www.shoemakervillage.org/.

Since this issue of the *Village* is the first in quite a while, articles that have been collected over the past few months have been included. Amanda Dilks, our Assistant Editor, contributed 22 pages of jokes to last month's issue of the *Village*! Because the expense involved with printing such a huge comedy section would be astronomical, she and I selected the best jokes of the contribution, and you will find them in this month's expanded joke section.

Continuing with good news, Daniel Burgess, our British contributor, has completed Evan's Quest, his first novel. You will find the final chapters of this epic saga in the coming months. Daniel is currently seeking professional publication of this novel and is working on a series of short stories that will be included in the

Village in the months after *Evan's Quest* is completed. We extend our congratulations to Daniel as well as our wishes for success in the publication of *Evan's Quest*.

Unfortunately, the neighborhood news over the past few months has either been very slow or we have not been notified of recent happenings. With the *Village* website, anyone can contribute an article to the *Village* staff, including those in the neighborhood who are aware of breaking news. If you see a news story happening, be sure to notify us through the website.

The Knights of the Square Table is nearing its end. In this issue, we have included Chapter 16 of Part II, which details the party's discovery of the secret world of Terringrama. As the story concludes in the coming months, we hope to offer a fully corrected version of the novel on the Internet and through paper copies. (As you may have noticed, the copy that was posted online consists of unproofread sections of the novel.) Since its beginnings in the July 1997 issue of the *Village*, *The Knights of the Square Table* has expanded to over 350 pages and is expected to finish at well over 400. At the current time, the last chapter of *The Knights of the Square Table* is scheduled to be published in June 2001.

Speaking of June, the *Village* editors have already begun developing plans to make the June issue of the *Village* the largest in its history. The June issue of the *Village* will contain the extended end chapter of *The Knights of the Square Table*, the conclusion of *Evan's Quest*, expanded normal sections, and an all-encompassing report entitled *A Review of UMHS*. Expected to measure at least twenty to thirty pages, the report will contain a compilation of articles on Upper Moreland High School by various students. Have you ever wondered who is the best teacher in the school, what courses you should (and shouldn't) take, and which activities are the best (and worst) to be involved in? Find the answers to these and other questions in this June's blowout issue as students who have experienced it all throughout the past few years share their views. This article will be uncensored, and there will be no holds barred! With the special sections that are planned, the June issue of the *Village* will be between 60 and 80 pages. Don't miss out on this extraordinary issue, scheduled for publication on May 25!

You may have noticed this month's edition of *Humor from the Village Square*, which is composed mostly of Christmas and holiday jokes. Unfortunately, when the teachers began to overload their students with an insane amount of work during November, we were unable to publish these jokes in the *Village*'s December issue. Amanda Dilks spent a significant amount of time compiling *22 pages of jokes*, which, when formatted and proofread, amount to about 7 pages. If you love

the holidays and are sorry to see that special time of year come to an end, then take a look at this month's comedy section for a little belated holiday cheer!

Sarah Duncan also returns to contribute a short story about the UMHS Marching Band. As you may recall, Sarah originally lived in Willow Grove, but moved to New Hampshire in June 2000. In addition, you might recognize a familiar name: Matthew Care, who served as Assistant Editor until February 29, 2000, has returned to contribute two articles to this month's issue.

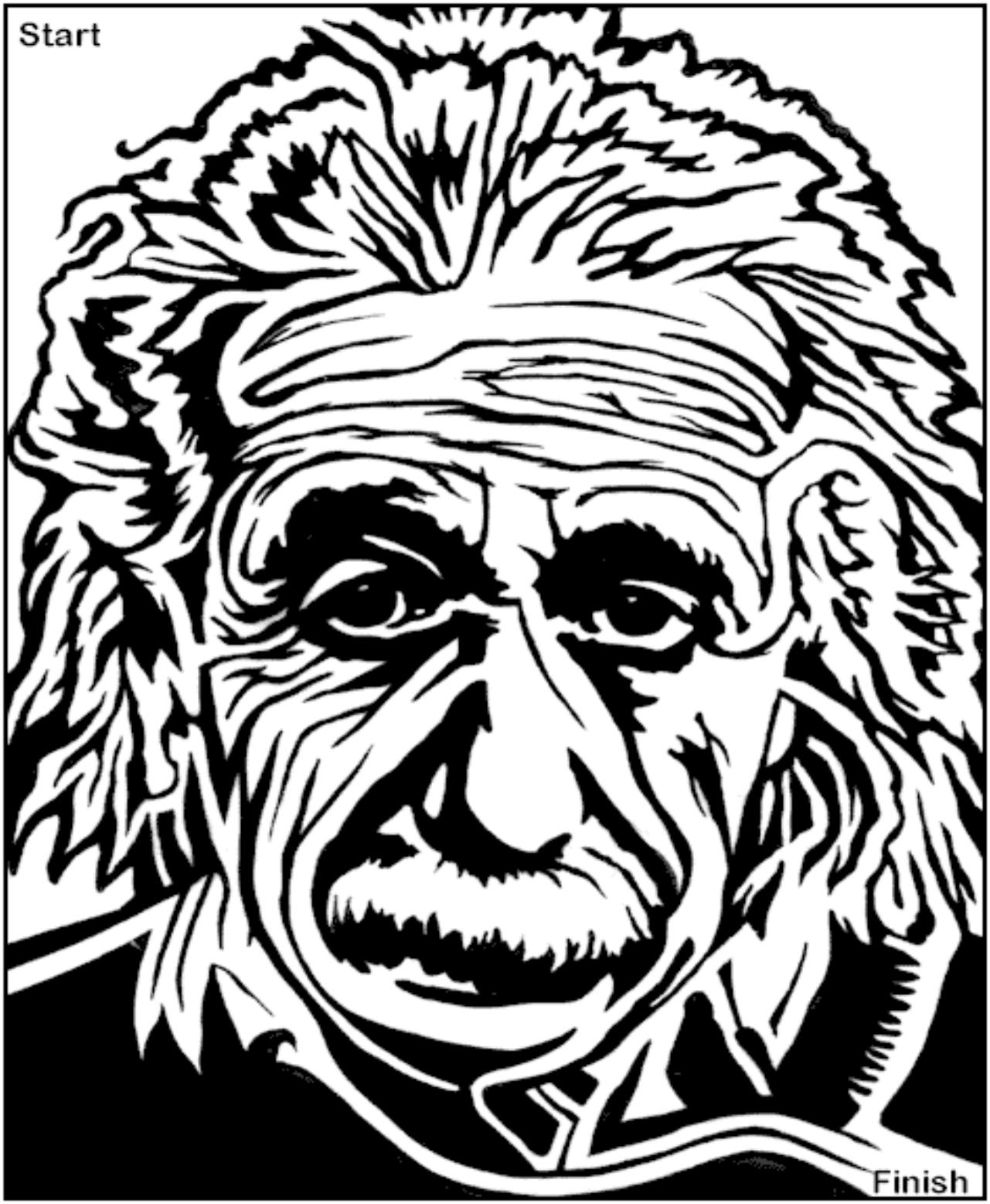
If you usually check out the puzzle page, you'll want to take a look this month, because we have featured a maze that resembles the face of Albert Einstein. If you don't like this type of puzzle, be sure to send us an E-Mail with your favorite puzzles. We're always looking for suggestions as to how to improve the *Village*.

That's all for this month! Enjoy the February issue of the *Village*, and we hope you'll keep reading in March!

puzzle page

Mazed™ "Einstein"

by Isaac Thayer



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For subscription information, visit our website at the address above for free signup or send $10.00 to the address above for a one-year subscription.

The March issue of Shoemaker Village is tentatively scheduled to be published on Friday, February 23, 2001.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Monday, February 19, 2000.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**

March 2001: Will the Upper Moreland School Board's attempt to eliminate intensive scheduling improve student performance?

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TROUBLEMAKERS DESTROY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

The Schrope family, renowned for its gigantic Christmas display that spans multiple houses and lasts for months, met with disaster this holiday season when vandals ransacked his hand-made collection of figurines.

The Schrope lawn began showing signs of Christmas early in November, when the first poles were raised shortly after Halloween. However, the construction abruptly came to a halt after Thanksgiving.



The Schrope Family was forced to downsize their display because of vandalism.

The display was not officially completed until Saturday, December 16, about one or two weeks later than normal. In addition, while the display had spanned two lawns in previous years, all of the decorations from adjoining properties were removed before the display was lit.

"It doesn't seem as spectacular this year," said one observer of the display. Compared to previous years, the display was lit later and turned off earlier. It lasted only eleven days.

On Friday, December 29, the lights were shut off for good as an approaching snowstorm threatened to ruin the festivities. Within six hours, there was no trace that it had been Christmas just a few days earlier.

Last year, thieves stole two of the cutout figurines that make the display stand out from others in the area, drawing attention from local news programs, which televised reports on the incident. It is unknown what happened to the figures.

Scaling down the display did not deter visitors, however. Cars lined the street, especially on Saturday, December 23, when the annual Santa visit was held. For the second consecutive year, the Upper Moreland police enacted a temporary regulation prohibiting parking on the side of the street close to the display.



The smaller display did not prevent visitors from coming out in hordes.

Other houses in and around the area were decorated generally with scaled-down displays. One neighbor blames the pre-2000 hype for inspiring neighbors to decorate extra for 2000. Evidently, the coming of the millennium did not cause people to do the same.

What will happen to the extravaganza of lights in future years has yet to be decided, but what is definite is that the vandalism has affected yet another long-standing tradition.

VANDALS STRIKE AGAIN

On the morning of Tuesday, October 31, vandals took yet another casualty in the ongoing war: the car of neighbor Scott Slousky.

Parked outside the Slousky's residence on mischief night, the car was damaged sometime during the night. Reportedly, an unknown troublemaker smashed a pumpkin over the car, ripping off the driver's side mirror.

The car, which had been parked on the street, was found with pieces of a pumpkin littered around the area.

VANDALS EGG NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE

Throughout the month of November, neighbors Tim and Mary Sue Hoffman, teachers at Upper Moreland High School, experienced a repeat of the egging incident that occurred earlier in the year.

The Hoffmans' house was pelted with eggs and other garbage on several occasions during November. Reportedly, the incidents occurred at various times of the night, most commonly between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m..

Around Halloween, the Hoffman family lit up their house with large floodlights in an attempt to deter the vandals. Apparently, lighting the house scared away the potential vandals.

As you may recall, the Hoffman house met with a similar fate near the end of the 1999-2000 school year. A disgruntled UMHS student was suspected in that incident.

COLDEST DECEMBER IN ELEVEN YEARS FREEZES AREA

Fall's last hurrah came just days before Thanksgiving, on Monday, November 20, with the temperature reaching a scalding 55 degrees. Shortly after, however, temperatures fell below the 40-degree mark and didn't consistently rise above until a month and a half later.

According to meteorologists, December 2000 was the 3rd coldest in the 20th century. A stagnant weather pattern featuring an arctic high pressure system that pulled cold Canadian air down into the area contributed to the abnormal cold spell.



Henry Sokolowski dug out as the snow continued to fall on December 30.

During the month of December, almost 13 inches of snow fell on Huntingdon Valley. In a normal December, the area is only covered with 3 inches or less of powder. The normal expected snowfall totals for an entire winter season rarely exceed 23 inches, the accumulation for an average winter in the Philadelphia area.



Butternut Drive was covered under nine inches of snow during the storm.

In the following weeks, forecasters predict a change in the weather pattern that will mix warmer air into the region for a

January thaw. The temperature is expected to exceed 40 degrees once again for about ten days. Subsequently, meteorologists warn, the cold streak may return, and with it, snow and ice.

Throughout January 2000, the area was under the grip of a cold spell that was the worst in several years.

Though a substantial amount of snow has fallen this year, the winter weather situation could have been much worse. While the neighborhood received nine inches of snow on December 30, during a snowstorm that crippled the area for the day, forecasters originally predicted from 15 to as many as 20 inches of snow. The prediction was later altered to reflect a storm that developed further out into the Atlantic Ocean than had originally been anticipated.

As you may recall, the National Weather Center in November predicted below normal temperatures with above normal precipitation in the northeast corridor for the remainder of the winter.



CHICKENS AND OTHER ANIMALS CONTINUE TO BOTHER NEIGHBORS

On Friday, November 24, a group of chickens was discovered in the pine trees near the border of the Sokolowskis' property.

When Henry Sokolowski attempted to scare away the beasts, he was met with fierce resistence. Giving up, he went inside to continue to do other things. When he returned the next morning, however, the chickens were still milling around the same spot.

The incident described above is just one of the many instances where animal control is still a major concern in the neighborhood. Several times throughout the month of December, rottweilers and other dangerous-looking dogs, as well as more chickens, were spotted roaming the neighborhood.

Neighbors further down Butternut Drive are annoyed by chickens in their driveways. The critters leave droppings that the neighbors have to clean up.

Once the snow cover appeared on December 20, there were no more reported incidents.

humor from the village square

by amanda dilks

Sad to see the holidays over? We've filled this month with post-holiday humor to give you some cheer!

ARE YOU A GRINCH?

Below, you will find a set of essential personality tests to prepare you for Christmas and for your New Year's resolutions:

1. You reuse last year's Christmas cards and send them out under your own name. (5 points)

2. You steal light bulbs from you neighbor's outdoor display to replenish your own supply. (5 points, 10 if neighbor's whole light sets or lighted Santa goes out)

3. You have dressed a dog or cat as Santa Claus, elf helper, or reindeer. (10 points for each; if you dressed an endangered species, 5 extra points)

4. You put out last year's stale candy canes for children. (1 point for each piece of sticky candy) If you put out a chocolate or marzipan Santa also, add 10 points

5. You enclose a shoddy and inferior gift from Target, Walmart, or K-Mart in a Bloomingdale's or other prestige box to impress your friends. (5 points for each infraction)

6. You make collect long distance phone calls to your family on Christmas day, claiming you are stuck in a phone booth. (5 points, 10 if from a cell phone)

7. At the office Christmas party, you horde huge stockpiles of goodies for later consumption at home. (5 points; 15 points if you use this stuff for your own party)

8. You steal the wreath from a parked car to use on your own. (Southern California only, others ignore: 5 points)

9. After an invitation to a friend's house, you bring a commercially produced fruitcake and try to pass it off as homemade. (5 points; 15 points if the fruitcake is from last year)

10. Any stealing from the Toys-for-Tots collection bins is a definite no-no. (20 points)

Evaluate your score on the "Grinch Scale" from 20 to 100.

20-30: You are just a cheeseball.

30-50: You are an apprentice in Yuletide larceny and are probably wanted by the police for overdue parking tickets.

50-100: Grinch, move over. The Meyer Lansky of Christmas crime has arrived.

BABY JESUS

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem.

A small child replied: "They couldn't get a baby-sitter."

BUS DRIVER'S CHRISTMAS

I am a bus driver for high school kids. It is Christmas time and the kids all gave me cards and presents.

Now I'm thinking, "Man, I must be a good driver and the kids even like me."

I opened the cards when I got home.

On the inside of one card it said: "Thanks for not killing us yet. We really appreciate it."

CHRISTMAS DINNER

A 4-year-old boy was asked to give the meal blessing before Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation. He began his prayer, thanking God for all his
friends, naming them one by one. Then he thanked God for Mommy, Daddy, brother, sister, Grandma, Grandpa, and all his aunts and uncles. Then he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the dressing, the fruit salad, the cranberry sauce, the pies, the cakes, even the Cool Whip.

Then he paused, and everyone waited--and waited. After a long silence, the young fellow looked up at his mother and asked, "If I thank God for the broccoli, won't he know that I'm lying?"

OFFICE HOLIDAY MEMO

To: All Employees
From: Management
Subject: Office conduct during the Christmas season

Effective immediately, employees should keep in mind the following guidelines in compliance with FROLIC (the Federal Revelry Office and Leisure Industry Council).

1. Running aluminum foil through the paper shredder to make tinsel is discouraged.

2. Playing Jingle Bells on the push-button phone is forbidden. (It runs up an incredible long distance bill.)

3. Work requests are not to be filed under "Bah humbug."

4. Company cars are not to be used to go over the river and through the woods to Grandma's house.

5. All fruitcake is to be eaten BEFORE July 25.

6. Egg nog will NOT be dispensed in vending machines.

In spite of these regulations, the staff is encouraged to have a Happy Holiday.

A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE

Dearest John:

I went to the door today and the postman delivered a partridge in a pear tree. What a delightful gift. I couldn't have been more surprised.

With dearest love and affection, Agnes

***

December 15th
Dearest John:

Today the postman brought your very sweet gift. Just imagine, two turtle doves. I'm just delighted at your very thoughtful gift.
They are just adorable.

All my love, Agnes

***

December 16th
Dear John:

Oh, aren't you the extravagant one! Now I must protest. I don't deserve such generosity. Three french hens. They are just darling but I must insist. You're just too kind.

Love Agnes

***

December 17th
Dearest John:

Today the postman delivered four calling birds. Now really! They are beautiful, but don't you think enough is enough? You're being too romantic.

Affectionately, Agnes

***

December 18th
Dearest John:

What a surprise! Today the postman delivered five golden rings. One for each finger. You're just impossible, but I love it. Frankly, John, all those squawking birds were beginning to get on
my nerves.

All my love, Agnes

***

December 19th
Dear John:

When I opened the door there were actually six geese-a-laying on my front steps. So you're back to the birds again, huh? Those geese are huge. Where will I ever keep them? The neighbors are complaining and
I can't sleep through the racket. PLEASE STOP!

Cordially, Agnes

***

December 20th
John:

What's with you and those birds???? Seven swans-a-swimming. What kind of joke is this? There's bird do-do all over the house and they never stop the racket. I'm a nervous wreck and I can't sleep all night. IT'S NOT FUNNY. So stop with those birds.

Sincerely, Agnes

December 21st
OK Buster:

I think I prefer the birds. What am I going to do with eight maids-a-milking? It's not enough with all those birds and eight maids-a-milking, but they had to bring their own cows. There is poop all over the lawn and I can't move into my own house. Just lay off me.

Ag

***

December 22nd
Hey:

What are you? Some kind of sadist? Now there's nine pipers playing. And do they play! They never stopped chasing those maids since they got here yesterday morning. The cows are upset and are stepping all over those screeching birds. No wonder they screech. What am I going to do? The neighbors have started a petition to evict me. You'll get yours.

From Ag

***

December 23rd
You Creep!

Now there's ten ladies dancing - I don't know why I call them ladies. Now the cows can't sleep and they've got diarrhea. My living room is a river of poop. The commissioner of buildings has subpoenaed me to give cause why the building shouldn't be condemned. I'm siccing the police on you.

One who means it, Ag

December 24th
Listen Idiot:

What's with the eleven lords a-leaping? All 234 of the birds are dead. I hope you're satisfied, you rotten swine.

Your sworn enemy, Miss Agnes McCallister

***

December 25th (From the law offices Taeker, Spedar, and Baegar)

Dear Sir:

This letter is to acknowledge your latest gift of twelve drummers drumming, which you have seen fit to inflict on our client, Miss Agnes McCallister. The destruction, of course, was total. All correspondence should come to our attention. If you should attempt to reach Miss McCallister at Happy Dale Sanitarium, the attendants have instructions to shoot you on sight. With this letter, please find attached a warrant for your arrest.

-Merry Christmas

POLITICALLY CORRECT RUDOLPH

Original text is followed by the "politically correct" translation.

Original: Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer
Translation: Rudolf was a four-hooved ungulate,

Original: Had a very shiny nose ...
Translation: Who, incidentally, possessed a nasal appendage of a maroon lustre.

Original: And if you ever saw him ...
Translation: Consequently, if circumstances were to present themselves that he ever came into your view,

Original: You would even say it glows ...
Translation: You would most undoubtedly remark as to its illuminary qualities.

Original: All of the other reindeer ...
Translation: The multitude of other members of the population in his ecological community,

Original: Used to laugh and call him names ...
Translation: Had previously teased, chuckled boisterously, and dubbed him unspeakable pseudonyms – the objective of which was to lower his self-esteem and make him miserable.

Original: They never let poor Rudolph join in any reindeer games
...
Translation: They also excluded him from participation in leisure activities consistent with their species.

Original: Then one foggy Christmas eve ...
Translation: However, on the twenty-fourth of December in an unspecified year,

Original: Santa came to say ...
Translation: A mythological, supernatural being inherent to western culture (who symbolizes the Christmas attitude and brings gifts to children) arrived through the supersaturated, humid air.

Original: Rudolph, with your nose so bright
...
Translation: He formally invited Rudolph, due to his extraordinary nasal characteristic,

Original: Won't you guide my sleigh tonight?
Translation: To stand at the forefront of his snow vehicle with the express purpose that he navigate through the nocturnal mist.

Original: Then all the reindeer loved him ...
Translation: At that point, the multitude of other members of the population in his ecological community who had previously teased, chuckled boisterously, and dubbed him unspeakable pseudonyms, reversed their disposition toward Rudolph to a more congenial, amicable relationship.

Original: And they shouted out with glee ...
Translation: They consequently exclaimed with great exaltation and fervor,

Original: Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer ...
Translation: Rudolph, the antlered mammal with a maroon nasal appendage,

Original: You'll go down in history!
Translation: You shall most certainly be recorded in the annals of time and your memory will be preserved for posterity!

WAYS TO CONFUSE SANTA CLAUS

Instead of milk and cookies, leave him a salad and a note explaining that you think he could stand to lose a few pounds.

While he's in your house, go find his sleigh and write him a speeding ticket.

Leave him a note, explaining that you've gone away for the holidays. Ask if he would mind watering your plants.

While he's in the house, replace all his reindeer with exact replicas. Then wait and see what happens when he tries to get them to fly.

Keep an angry bull in your living room. If you think a bull goes crazy when he sees a little red cape, wait until he sees that big, red Santa suit!

Build an army of mean-looking snowmen on the roof, holding signs that say "We hate Christmas," and "Go away Santa."

Leave a note by the telephone, telling Santa that Mrs. Claus called and wanted to remind him to pick up some milk and a loaf of bread on his way home.

Leave out a copy of your Christmas list with last-minute changes and corrections.

While he's in the house, cover the top of the chimney with barbed wire.

Leave Santa a note, explaining that you've moved. Include a map with unclear and hard-to-read directions to your new house.

Paint "hoof-prints" all over your face and clothes. While he's in the house, go out on the roof. When he comes back up, act like you've been "trampled."

While he's on the roof, yell up to Santa, asking if he'd mind adjusting your TV antenna. When he does so, tell him,"That's good" and don't let him move until the commercials come on.

A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO MEN'S GIFTS

Ladies, with the holidays coming, this is going to be a big help in selecting that special gift for the man in your life!

Rule #1:
When in doubt - buy him a cordless drill. It does not matter if he already has one. I have a friend who owns 17 and he has yet to complain. As a man, you can never have too many cordless drills. No one knows why.

Rule #2:
If you cannot afford a cordless drill, buy him anything with the word ratchet or socket in it. Men love saying those two words. "Hey George, can I borrow your ratchet?" "OK. By-the-way, are you through with my 3/8-inch socket yet?" Again, no one knows why.

Rule #3:
If you are really, really broke, buy him anything for his car. A 99-cent ice scraper, a small bottle of deicer or something to hang from his rear view mirror. Men love gifts for their cars. No one knows why.

Rule #4:
Do not buy men socks. Do not buy men ties. And never buy men bathrobes. I was told that if God had wanted men to wear bathrobes, He wouldn't have invented Jockey shorts.

Rule #5:
You can buy men new remote controls to replace the ones they have worn out. If you have a lot of money buy your man a big-screen TV with the little picture in the corner. Watch him go wild as he flips, and flips, and flips.

Rule #6:
Do not buy a man any of those fancy liqueurs. If you do, it will sit in a cupboard for 23 years.

Rule #7:
Do not buy any man industrial-sized canisters of after-shave or deodorant. I'm told they do not stink - they are earthy.

Rule #8:
Buy men label makers. Almost as good as cordless drills. Within a couple of weeks there will be labels absolutely everywhere.

Socks. Shorts. Cups. Saucers. Door. Lock. Sink. You get the idea. No one knows why.

Rule #9:
Never buy a man anything that says "some assembly required" on the box. It will ruin his Special Day and he will always have parts left over.

Rule #10:
Good places to shop for men include Northwest Iron Works, Parr Lumber, Home Depot, John Deere, Valley RV Center, and Les Schwab Tire. (NAPA Auto Parts and Sears' Clearance Centers are also excellent men's stores. It doesn't matter if he doesn't know what it is. "From NAPA Auto, eh? Must
be something I need. Hey! Isn't this a starter for a '68 Ford Fairlane? Wow! Thanks.")

Rule #11:
Men enjoy danger. That's why they never cook - but they will barbecue. Get him a monster barbecue with a 100-pound propane tank. Tell him the gas line leaks. "Oh the thrill! The challenge! Who wants a hamburger?"

Rule #12:
Tickets to a Red Wing/Lions/Pistons/Tigers game are a smart gift. However, he will not appreciate tickets to "A Retrospective of 19th Century Quilts." Everyone knows why.

Rule #13:
Men love chainsaws. Never, ever, buy a man you love a chainsaw. If you don't know why - please refer to Rule #8 and what happens when he gets a label maker.

Rule #14:
It's hard to beat a really good wheelbarrow or an aluminum extension ladder. Never buy a real man a step ladder. It must be an extension ladder. No one knows why.

Rule #15:
Rope. Men love rope. It takes us back to our cowboy origins, or at least The Boy Scouts. Nothing says love like a hundred feet of 3/8" manila rope. No one knows why.

Napster: The Facts

It's hard to turn on the television in today's age without being exposed to the Internet. Advertisements and news stories that cover the Internet appear countless times every day on every channel imaginable. If you've watched the news, not being exposed to the controversy over copyrighted material that's being distributed over the Internet is impossible. While many people I know have definite opinions on this matter, I am more reserved in saying that each side in these debates has its merits.

At the height of the so-called problem is the distribution of MP3 audio files without royalties to the recording companies. Programs such as Napster, Gnuetilla, and Freenet and websites such as mp3.com and audiogalaxy.com allow anyone with even a 486 computer and a 14.4 modem to download these files for no charge. I am not exaggerating when I state that one could find any song that he or she has ever heard at any time or could even think of. Not only can virtually any piece of music be found, but these files are recorded at CD-quality or better in most instances. Of course, the recording industry, seeking to protect its property, is involved in a multitude of lawsuits against these web sites.

Having never tried using the program before, I downloaded Napster in order to test it out. At first, I struggled with attempting to solve some technical issues, but within fifteen minutes I was able to enter the "music community", as the icon that installs on the desktop of your machine states. As I was trying to search for material for the subject of my other article, I typed in "Eminem" as the artist's name, and results flooded the screen within five seconds. Clicking on one of them, the file downloaded on a high-speed connection in less than fifteen seconds and I was met with the remarkable lyrics of "The Real Slim Shady" (which, of course, I own). The song that I downloaded isn't important; but the speed with which I was able to obtain results was remarkable. Almost any artist I searched for returned hundreds of results within a few seconds,

and less than half a minute later I would be able to listen to virtually any song ever produced. Thirty seconds is an overstatement - the songs could be listened to while they were downloading, so the average time between deciding that one wants a song and listening to it is less than ten seconds. I quickly found that no genre had a shortage of songs: a search for Beethoven's ninth symphony returned several thousand results before the program stopped, including remixes of almost every kind with some songs exceeding twenty-five minutes in length. However, one can also find comedy sketches of every kind in addition to songs, and so many other kinds of audio files that one could not listen to them all in ten lifetimes. When I was using the program, a status bar at the bottom of the screen showed that 5.392 *terrabytes* of files were available at that moment.

Many will argue that the availability of these CD-quality files is detrimental to the recording industry. Perhaps that's why mp3.com agreed to pay the record companies $30 million in return for the rights to allow their songs to be distributed on their website. However, the law is not as clear-cut as they (or the other side) would like it to be.

While the downloading of these files is technically illegal, there are so many ways to evade the copyright laws that they might as well be completely free. I am referring to the "fair use" clause, which states that the use of copyrighted material for news-reporting purposes (such as for this article) is allowable. Furthermore, the text of the document is unclear when referring to noncommercial use. While copying CDs and selling them for profit (i.e. piracy) is obviously illegal, a grey area is encountered when referring to noncommercial uses. This issue is at the center of the current lawsuits between internet companies and artists: is the use of music files for non-profit purposes acceptable?

In the Napster case, the evidence against the recording industry appears overwhelming. Since the legal system in this country is based on precedent, one must review previous cases such as those involving the introduction of the VCR in 1984. In the case of Sony vs. Universal

Studios, Sony argued that the use of a VCR to record copyrighted television programs was not illegal, and the corporation won the case forcefully. Had Sony not won that legal battle, you most likely would not have a VCR in your house right now, and if you did, it would most likely be able to play, not record. DVD players today are involved in a similar court battle. Do these previous cases mean that Napster will win its court battle? Certainly not. But do these cases mean that there is some legitimacy to Napster's battle? Most likely.

Whether downloading these files is illegal is for the courts to decide, but whether downloading these files is immoral is for you to decide. Now on to the articles...

Is the Sharing of Information Really That Bad?

At first, people are quick to label services such as Napster as having no value whatsoever except for contributing to the illegal activities of its users. Upon closer inspection, however, there are many merits to the services of file sharing networks that are not readily apparent.

Throughout the last few months, the Napster court cases have been in the news frequently. The media, supported by the advertising of the major record labels that have sued Napster on several grounds, is obviously biased when reporting on the case. On the day that the Napster preliminary injunction was issued, critics were quick to turn the issue into a bloodbath.

At first, I fully agreed, having never used the software. The downloading of copyrighted material from the internet is currently illegal but is in such a grey area of the law that even lawyers don't know how to approach the subject. While anyone who surfs the Internet hears of numerous websites being shut down for having this sort of material on their sites, the major reason for these shutdowns is that free webspace providers generally don't want to have anything to do with lawsuits and other legal problems. Therefore, instead of fighting over a grey area of the law, they simply take the easy way out, because the easy way is the way in which they stand to make the most money. Do you know anyone who has been sued on the grounds of copyright infringement over the Internet? The reason for this inaction is that there have been very few cases on the subject with which to provide a precedent. Therefore, the result of the Napster case could have far-reaching effects – from making the copying of music files (and even other types of files) on the Internet completely legal, to killing the idea of file sharing online.

However, after downloading and testing the program, I feel that the program has other uses that the record companies that are foolishly taking arms against Napster fail to perceive. The entire lawsuit is a game between corporate entities. If you, as the chief executive of a

corporation, learned of another company that provided the same service as you to 38 million users and was growing at an exponential rate, wouldn't you attempt to shut the company down to eliminate competition? The record companies are taking the same action, just less noticeable. However, when one of the companies at least realized that forging a partnership with that company would be easier, the Napster alliance with the record company Bertsmann was born.

However, while the success of Napster can be analyzed for years to come, the real reason for the number of subscribers that Napster has at the current time is that it has no real competition. In a survey conducted on the Internet, almost four-fifths of the respondents stated that, if a one-time fee based service like Napster were available legally, they would subscribe to the service. The reason for Napster's popularity is that the record companies, while fighting the corporation, neglected to research their own opportunities in the digital music field.

In addition, the record companies fail to see that they might increase sales by allowing programs such as Napster to continue. This statement can be proven in two ways: first, by looking at statistics that state that sales for CDs and other types of traditional media have increased steadily over recent years, and second, by realizing that the vast majority of users do not have CD-R/RW drives or other types of transfer devices. Determining whether Napster has had any effect on the sales of CDs over the past ten years would require a vast study, but since sales haven't fallen, how can the companies claim that Napster and other programs have hurt their business? Because many users can't afford recordable CD drives, many users of Napster don't have the equipment necessary to transfer the music onto traditional media to listen away from their computers. Even for those with recordable CD drives, digital music on the Internet is far from perfect. Many recordings have errors in them. (They may not be full length, may be poor quality, etc.) Finding CD-quality recordings of a full album can take a considerable amount of time. When a user downloads a song that he or she likes from Napster, the easiest way to

get a quality recording is to simply go to a record store. I myself know of at least one person who has downloaded a CD from the service, and then bought the same recording the next day. In this instance, the record companies made money from Napster in that the person in question would never have known about the CD she bought without having searched for it online first. Would most people using Napster have heard about many different artists without first logging on, and would they have bought these artists' CDs without even knowing of them? Most likely not. Even if the person doesn't buy a CD after listening to music on Napster, it is likely that they never would have bought the CD in the first place, and the recording companies are unaffected, even helped by the free advertising the service provides to millions of consumers every day.

Next time, before you bash users of services like Napster for being immoral, consider the benefits to both the users of these services and to the recording companies that may result.

Music Sharing On the Internet

Okay, now you're going to hear a lot of *crazy talk* from people about how it's wrong....

I disagree. It is only natural that I should defend this institution. I am a participant there in, and I have much to benefit from its acceptance. Don't you think a drunk would vote on prohibition? However, my support of music-sharing is not purely selfish. I believe that its unanimous acceptance and legalization would benefit everyone. There is no reason it should be considered wrong. Changes should be made.

I am all for the sharing of music over the Internet. This has been going on for many years; it started long before Napster was released and became the poster boy for the music-sharing industry. I started obtaining music from the Internet about two years before Napster hit the public. Downloadable music was a good idea then, and it's a good idea now.

Music is art. Music, of any type, is a beautiful creation–I don't care whether it's modern rock, classical, dark, heavy, loud thrash metal, tribal chants, or annoying, no-talent Brittany Spears or N'sync (who, personally, I find offensive and deny credibility as musicians). See, even bands I don't like, I recognize have a right to exist. So, pop, for example, may not do it for me. However, it may move someone else. And that's the whole point of music! It's supposed to speak to you. That is its value, and that is why it should be shared. In short, music, in my opinion, is wonderful. I enjoy an eclectic series of musical genres, but what I enjoy most is the general concept of music. It is a gift, and it needs to be shared. Whether it appeals to you or not, all music is art and should be shared and celebrated for its existence, if not its content.

Music has been delivered in a variety of ways throughout history. In the past 150 years, media has advanced in huge leaps. At first, it was only available at public exhibitions. You had to go out to see a musical performance. Then came recording technology, and in no time, it was applied to music. People could bring a performance into their home. Advances kept creeping

up, and music became readily available. Records, reel to reel, radio, eight-tracks, cassettes, and finally CDs–all designed to more efficiently deliver music and allow it to reach a wider audience. And advances are still being made. Now comes along this thing called the Internet. It's revolutionary. It will bring people together. It will increase the flow of information and ideas around the whole world. It will promote the free exchange of culture and interests. It will change the way we communicate. Someone gets the idea to share a copy of a song from a CD they own with other people. And suddenly, everyone is shocked and appalled. The fat cats of the Music Industry Country Club throw their hands in the air and demand an immediate halt to this unlawful free exchange of culture. Did we forget what the Internet was supposed to do?

"But it's copyrighted!" they whine. "It's stealing, and it's illegal as well as immoral." Fine. I concede that legally it is wrong. I am not saying that music-sharing is currently lawful. I am saying that it SHOULD be and that we have the power to make it so if we open our minds to the idea. People need to realize that everyone gains from music-sharing. Consumers get a greater variety and pay nothing. Artists get exposure, and hopefully a warm fuzzy feeling from sharing their gift. As for the poor record company execs--I see the advent of online music-sharing as a wake up call for the music industry. No longer will people be forced to pay $15 for a CD that cost 1.3 cents to make. There is nothing wrong with wanting to make a living in music, but many musicians have become downright greedy. Music should be free. I propose full free access to music via the Internet. It costs nothing to deliver the music to the consumer's home, so how can you justify a price tag? For now, downloadable music is still the exception, not the rule. CD sales are not dropping off. In time, however, I believe the limited regulation of online music-sharing would allow it to become the standard delivery method for musicians. And I really wish bands would stop whining about losing money. It's called touring! It comprises more revenue than album sales. And don't forget merchandising. The Internet offers a world of opportunities. People who would otherwise never have heard of your band can now know what you sound like

and maybe be touched by your music. And if you're too busy looking at the bottom line to appreciate that, then your motivation is all wrong.

Times change, and we need to adjust our thinking to match. I say we lift the restrictions on online music-sharing–let Napster stay, and keep it free–and get the music out there. There should be a voluntary compliance by musicians to submit their music on the Internet. Suddenly, everyone is better off, and it's not stealing, so you can stop worrying about breaking federal and moral laws. Music-sharing should not be wrong, and our current laws cannot and should not be applied to it. New times and new technology call for new action. The Internet can do great things in sharing music with people all over the world, if we let it. If naysayers would only open their minds, they would see that music-sharing is neither wrong nor hurtful to the music business. However, there will be those who will maintain that it is wrong. They should know that they will be in for a fight. Do you really think it ends with Napster? Make us pay. Make ME pay, I dare you! Do you know what I'll do? I'll find another way to get music for free. The bottom line is you can't kill the revolution. Like I was saying, with the right treatment, we can make a smooth transition to a music industry where online music-sharing is accepted and integrated. However, your approval is not required, only encouraged. Like it or not, this is the wave of the future. Music-sharing is the new breed. Cut off its arm and watch it grow right back. Stand your ground against it and it only gets stronger. So, you can either stand with our ranks of music-sharers and help cultivate the next big thing in music, or you can keep fighting, but...

YOU CAN'T KILL THE REVOLUTION!

The *Unseen*

You're in danger. Though you can't pinpoint any particular reason that you feel uneasy, you keep running. The darkness increases as you travel down the corridor, and the light behind you fades into oblivion. Pitch blackness is all around you, but you know you're being chased. Suddenly the ground disappears beneath you, and you plummet to the depths of the earth, pursued by an unknown entity, a monster that, for eternity, will remain unseen.

Everybody has experienced a dream at one time or another similar to the one described above, but dreams are just that--dreams. When the dream ends, you wake up, and an hour later, the horrifying ordeal is forgotten. At Upper Moreland High School, however, there are unseen people around all of us everyday, and the reality of everyday life is that many students and teachers simply ignore the consequences of leaving the unseen unnoticed.

The unseen are normal students in various grades, attending classes of various difficulty levels, and pursuing a variety of interests both in and out of school. They have only one feature in common--the way that the general populace shows little or no respect for their strengths and abilities.

Before I continue, let me state that I don't consider myself as one of the group I am about to describe. If I did consider myself part, I wouldn't be writing this article, because I would simply be asking for pity for myself. The purpose of this article is not to put down those who are "seen", but simply to point out that there are certain people who do not get the respect they deserve.

Recently I reflected upon what a teacher told me one day in early December. He was making a comment on an event that had recently transpired, in which one of the unseen had finally been noticed. The teacher said, "He does a lot of good things, but it's a shame that he doesn't get the respect he deserves." After observing this person, I found the preceding quote to be undeniably true.

The unseen are those who participate in more out-of-school than in-school activities. The unseen are those who are harassed by fellow students because they pursue slightly different interests. The unseen are those who were forced to pass up the opportunity to attend the school dance because they were rejected multiple times and eventually stopped trying. The unseen are those who try their hardest in everything they do but whose efforts prove fruitless. The unseen are those who care about school and learning but are alienated by peers who consider them "weird". Above all, however, the unseen are those who aren't really that different from anyone else.

Most of the highly visible people who receive all the awards are very deserving of the praise they receive. The problem, however, is that many students are overlooked because they are not as known as those who are visible.

Every one of the above examples was derived from the tales of others who relayed their experiences to me either directly or indirectly. I am writing this article because I feel that many students do not appreciate the contributions made to the school community by these people. However, I also feel that there are a few people of this age group, rude and arrogant beyond belief, who amuse others and attract friends by taking advantage of and making fun of those who will not stoop to childish name calling.

One of the unseen is ranked high in his/her class and has labored to maintain an average in the A+ range for four years. Another is a person who almost developed a second "personality" because he thought that he would be accepted if he were more outgoing with his peers. Another was intelligent enough to be able to apply to a prestigious university, yet he/she is still considered dumb. A fourth walks into the cafeteria every day and sits down, eats his lunch away from others, leaves without saying a word to anyone, and nobody cares. One of the unseen is involved on a school team, attends every practice, and still is the brunt of careless comments behind his back. I could continue to list more members of this "elite" group for the

rest of this composition. The negative reactions of their peers on these unseen persons has had disastrous effects on their self-esteem. Failure after failure after failure has convinced several of this group to give up on ever being accepted or to attempt to change their way of life in order to attract new friends.

What have the unseen ever done to merit the way others treat them? Have they been rude or arrogant to those who have interacted with them? Most of these people have purely benign intentions and would never hurt anybody. Are they uninvolved in school activities or uncaring about school life? Perhaps one or two of the people mentioned are less involved, but if uninvolvement were the cause for this sort of treatment, then all of the students would have to be uninvolved, which is simply not the case. Besides, one should not be judged on the number of activities in which he or she participates. Have these students not tried to improve their situation? Many have tried harder than anyone at everything they do. In reality, the reason for the chasm that divides the unseen from the rest of the students was created by something as simple as sitting in the wrong seat in 9th grade Geometry class.

The next time you walk through the halls of UMHS, pay attention to those around you whom you have never noticed before. Many say that the youth of America are degrading into a mindless mush who listen to alternative music, use foul language, create trouble, are disobedient, and don't understand the "old-fashioned" values of hard work. Look more closely, and you will discover that the reality is quite the opposite -- it is just that many of the troublemakers overshadow those, both seen and unseen, who have a lot to offer to society.

Critical Analysis of "The *Unseen*"

Includes essay, jokes, and critic's comments to author and readers
by Matthew Care

My biggest legitimate criticism of "The *Unseen*" is the author's contention that the forces acting on an individual which cause that individual to take on the characteristics of the unseen are purely external and beyond the power of that individual to change. "In reality, the reason for the chasm that divides the unseen from the rest of the students was created by something as simple as sitting in the wrong seat in 9th grade Geometry class." *In an alternate universe, maybe!* The likelihood of such a wholly insignificant CHOICE (portrayed here not as a choice but rather as fate) being the first event in the downward spiral commonly traveled by the unseen approaches nonexistence.

It is easy and convenient to blame one's present condition on some distant detail, the "significance" of which one was ignorant at the time. While doing so lessens the pain of regret and absolves one from all blame, it is false reasoning. How can the author seriously connect one's past choice of seating with a present existence of fruitless labor, social isolation, and self-consciousness? It simply cannot be done. A choice of such infinitesimal magnitude cannot bear the load of such a consequence! Clearly, the author would like it to be just that easy. This most likely results from a fear of vulnerability. To acknowledge a cause as a choice, and then to regret it, requires the admission of misused responsibility and fallibility–in short, that one feels vulnerable. It is not a comfortable feeling. But accepting no part as a factor of one's own development is just crazy. Staying with the given example, perhaps the author should examine more of the circumstances surrounding this scholar of geometry. Was he talkative? Did he volunteer much or give anyone a reason to notice him? Was he exceedingly smart? If so, supercilious? What was he like before that historic class? Did he have a record of

reservedness? These questions should be answered before any legitimate revelation or generality is made.

The author's attempt in this essay is obvious: to portray the unseen as hapless, innocent victims of a cruel fate. Unseen or not, people need to account for their actions. I cannot account for any part of who I am today without at least including a choice that I made, at some point, on some level of consciousness.

If you're saying right now, "this guy doesn't believe in fate," I guess you're right. An interactive supreme being I do believe in. The idea that every moment from here to eternity is pre-scripted and followed to the letter? No, I have trouble accepting that.

As hard as the author tries to paint them as victims of circumstance, the unseen (who, as the author pointed out, are not so different from everyone else) are in as much control of their lives as everyone else, and who they become needs to properly be attributed to the choices they have made, their beliefs, their values, and various other factors in their personal development, not a simplistic and inconsequential scapegoat such as sitting in the wrong seat, years ago, in a class no one remembers.

-Matthew Care

Note to reader: Yes, I have returned, and with a work of such beauty and craftsmanship as to almost justify a year's leave. In all that time, thoughts were filling my head, but I never had the motivation to put them to paper. The process of composition recently and slowly began to trickle back to me. And then one day, a deluge, when a recent period of AP Calculus became the site of a series of heated debates ranging from politics to curriculum standards to Steve's views on the teenage social order. Ask anyone. By the time class was over, I hadn't done any calc, and I was breathing smoke. I realized something. Offering my insight to Steve, I said, "Sometimes I hate you. Sometimes I can tolerate you. Sometimes, I'm indifferent. But

whichever it is, I've realized that my life would be boring without you. You can get me fired up like NO ONE else." That night my inspiration came back, and this is the product. Admit it. You missed the caustic banter between the two of us! Well, knowing this, I've prepared a treat for you all. Below you will find a series of sarcastic comments and minor irritations caused by Steve's essay. It's the kind of stuff I'm infamous for around here, but I hope you will not make you give less credibility to my formal analysis. It's just meant as some light reading. I wouldn't have published it if I thought it would detract from my integrity. Enjoy.

In the first paragraph...something's not right. What is unseen? The monster or the victim? And then the falling. Woh, Steve. We appreciate your attempt at imagery to emphasize your point as well as create a captivating introduction, but I'm sure you know what you're trying to say.

"Awe, you young whipper-snappers! With your alternative music and your potty mouths. Don't know the meaning of hard work, you don't. That's your problem! And you complain too much about being unseen. In my day we couldn't afford to be seen! I myself had to walk sixteen miles to school each day, unseen both ways! And it was good enough for me!"

Ninth-grade Geometry class–hardly seems arbitrary. Did anyone have geometry with Steve in 9th grade? If so, please contact me. I'd love to hear from you. If you remember where he sat, how he acted, who he talked to–anything that could shed some light on this obvious skeleton in the closet of Steve's soul.

Well, that's a nice little disclaimer there, about not including yourself. Regardless, who still thinks Steve is just subtly asking for pity and attention? Come on, I can't be the only one!

Steve, I believe that I speak for all of your friends, acquaintances, and people who know you when I say that we don't appreciate being used as obvious examples (obvious because, let's face it, you don't have many friends, and everyone knows who you talk to the most) in your oh-so-comprehensive thesis.

Once Upon a Band Field

by Sarah Duncan

The word “beginning” is such a relative term. I didn’t have to start out my high school career cold as many people do. I began in the end of my eighth grade year by joining the Upper Moreland Senior High School Marching Unit. In doing so, I not only became a member of a rather large family, I also eliminated the transition period between middle school and high school. I had upperclassmen friends from the start, which was important because I’ve never gotten along well with people my own age. These upperclassmen were able to show me which hallway was used for which subject before I even knew what classes I was assigned to. This alone made the school feel less like a foreign country and more like a second home.

In the last two weeks of August we embarked on a five-day-a-week, eight-hour-a-day training session. We learned the music for our show, we were drilled in marching, and we put our drill training to use by learning the sets, or choreography, for the show. Finally, we linked the music with the marching out on the field. When I say we were training, it’s almost an understatement. Band camp was almost more of a voluntary torture session. The music and visuals staff inflicted the torture, but we were the ones that chose to stay every year. In Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, an average summer day has a humidity count of ninety percent and a heat index of at least ninety-four. On those averagely hot, humid, and miserable days, we would be standing out on a field, devoid of grass by the second week, eagerly anticipating 12:30 PM when we would receive our hour-long lunch break, and then 5:00 when we would be released to enjoy the remainder of our summer day.

Although band camp has received somewhat inappropriate, yet inventive names over the years, almost no one there would have given it up for anything in the world. During the ending week and a half of band camp, UMMU, or Upper Moreland Marching Unit, held what we called

Spirit Week. Every day had a theme, and every day there was a war to see which grades within the band would come up with the most spirit points. The last day of band camp was deemed water gun day. Everyone who didn't mind getting wet (or getting everyone else wet) brought a water gun to camp that day. Several large coolers were filled with water, and lunch break was no longer set aside for lunch. The band field and parking lot became war zones, and the losing team took out their frustrations on the winning team. The winning team playfully attacked the losing team, and pretty much everyone would seek revenge on their enemies in the healthiest way possible: water gun fights.

Water gun day also brought an activity called "creeking." Usually, the smallest, lightest members of the band and color guard were smart if they hid that day because if they were discovered, the larger, stronger members would most likely lift them, drag them kicking and screaming across the field, and dump them into the creek at the lower end of the field. Anyone who made it through senior year without having ever been "creeked" was deemed a god or goddess. I wasn't one of those people.

By the time school finally started in September, the freshmen had been initiated into the Upper Moreland High School's social structure, and they didn't feel like complete outsiders as long as they had their fellow bandos to turn to. There were football game performances every Friday, competitions every Saturday, and practices for two to three hours Tuesday through Friday. Marching band became my life from August until the final competition in November. I didn't have time to realize that I had begun the incredible voyage of my teenage years. We took second place at a multi-state competition in Giants Stadium and became state champions during my freshman year. I will remember my experiences with the marching unit for the rest of my life as the beginning of high school because without it, I would never have become the person I am.

I can still smell the dry, dusty field on hot fall afternoons. I can taste the beginning of a drizzle as we were forced to perform over and over on days in which the rain didn't fall at full

force but showed itself just enough to keep our clothes damp. I can still feel the adrenaline pulsing through my veins as over 100 UMMU members took the field in competition and made it ours. I can hear the static-like sound of hundreds of voices in the stands, all directed at us, the band on the field that stole their hearts. UMMU may only have been the beginning of an experience, but as long as I replay those memories in my mind, my beginning will never end.

Evan's Quest

By Daniel Burgess

Chapter 10 - Part III

Evan slowly opened his eyes. Around him he saw a magical place. It looked as if Evan were on a cloud. Evan was lying down on his back, and around him were hundreds of fairies, all smiling and giggling. Their wings were an amazing sight--each one had a different colour, with different shades of green, blue and orange.

"We healed your foot for you," one fairy said. Evan realised the pain in his ankle was completely gone.

"Thank you. Where am I?" Evan asked. One fairy flew up and hovered above Evan's face.

Evan had a better chance to look at the fairy now. He examined her. She looked like a beautiful woman, but much smaller. She had long blonde hair and a perfect face. The fairy above his face said: "You are in the fairy kingdom!" Evan sat up and the fairy flew to the left to dodge Evan. He looked around.

The sky was a soft purple colour, and the ground was made of fluffy clouds. Evan stood up, and his foot sank into the ground quickly. He pulled it back up.

"We're sorry. The ground isn't made for humans. You're the first human we've had here," one fairy said after seeing what had happened.

A group of fairies from the back of the crowd flew up, struggling to hold a glass. They flew over to Evan. "Here you go." Evan took the glass and thanked them. He looked into the glass and saw a green, transparent liquid. He took a sip, and the flavour was unbelievable. It tasted like fruits and things he'd never tasted before.

Evan spent about one hour in the fairy kingdom, listening to the fairies tell him tales about the fairy kingdom. They showed him around and gave him more and more of the drink.

Evan sat down on the soft ground, being careful not to go through it again. Evan was beginning to get dizzy. He heard the fairies around him laughing.

"What…was in that…drink?" Evan managed to say, but his voice was slow and sounded different. The fairies continued laughing, but their laughs changed and sounded evil.

"What's going…on?" Evan's eyes were closing slowly. With the bit of straight thought he had left, Evan realised he had been tricked. He grabbed one of the potions Elgan had given him. He took the cork out and threw it with the little strength he had left. It flew through the sky and a blue mist followed it, but the bottle stopped in mid air and the blue mist surrounded it.

"This is our kingdom. You can't defeat us here!" one fairy said and laughed evilly. Evan's strength was being drained from him.

Evan concentrated his thoughts on his magic. A fireball began to grow in his hand. It grew and grew.

"What's he doing?" one fairy whispered to another.

"No! He's a magician!" another shouted, panicking.

Evan threw the fireball into the crowd of fairies. The screams of pain took the place of the laughter. All the remaining fairies panicked and began to run around. Some of them dived at Evan, clinging to his skin.

Evan closed his eyes and scrunched his face up. He concentrated as hard as he could. A couple of seconds went by. There was a flash of light from Evan's body and a large bang. The fairies that were clinging onto Evan were flung into the air.

Evan realised he and his magic were getting weaker, and the fairies outnumbered him. He did one last spell. He closed his eyes and held out his hand. In it a small sphere appeared. Evan's drained body tensed as he tried to squeeze a last bit of energy out of it. The golden sphere was about the size of Evan's palm now and he placed it on the ground. More fairies flew towards him. He stood up quickly and jumped into the air.

Evan landed on the ground and went straight through it. He knew he would. Evan found himself falling through the sky. He looked down and realised that the fairy kingdom was up in the sky, on a cloud. Evan was falling faster and faster and suddenly landed in the woods with a tremendous thud. Evan lost consciousness for the second time that day.

Back up in the fairy kingdom, all the fairies crowded around the sphere Evan had left on the ground. "What is it?" one fairy said.

A red haze suddenly appeared from Evan's unconscious body. The line of haze flew up into the sky and through the clouds. The haze went into the sphere slowly and there was silence.

One of the fairies screamed, "No!" The sphere exploded with a golden light.

Evan slowly opened his eyes. He was back in the tavern, lying on his bed. "Ah, Evan. Hello." Evan recognised the voice He turned his head and looked at Ry, who was sitting on his bed.

"Evan, I'm very impressed. You passed your first test."

"Test?" Evan gasped.

"Yes. I told you we came here to do three tests."

"You mean, that was all set up?" Evan shouted.

"No, calm down. The fairies are real enough, or were, I should say. You destroyed them, and you used the magic you had learned earlier. Well done." Evan's head slumped to the pillow and he sighed.

The next day Evan and Ry were up early eating their breakfast downstairs in the tavern. Evan looked around. The tavern was empty apart from Ry, the barman and himself.

"You are going to do your second task today, so we need to get going quickly," Ry said quietly to Evan.

"Do I have to do these tasks?" Evan sighed.

"Yes. They are a part of your training," Ry replied.

Later that morning Evan and Ry walked out of the tavern and headed to the south of the village.

"I have some friends. They are dwarfs. They are having some trouble in their diamond mines. Your task is to help them. I won't be there again. You have to do it on your own," Ry said to Evan.

"Trouble? What do I have to do?" Evan asked.

“You’ll see when you get there, right up there.” Ry pointed his hand towards a small mountain. Evan saw a little entrance on the side of the mountain.

“Good luck. I’ll see you later on today,” Ry said, walking off in another direction.

Evan sighed again and began to climb the steep, jagged mountain. There was no clear path, because it was too steep, but there were plenty of ledges. Evan had climbed almost half way up to the entrance and was beginning to get a little tired, so he stopped at a small ledge and sat down. He looked down at the village. From where he was he could see it all.

The ledge Evan was sitting on was cold and had bits of green weed around the edge of it. After about five minutes or resting, Evan stood up and continued climbing. He reached the entrance and stared in. Inside the cave it was almost pitch black. Evan was apprehensive to go inside the cave, so he said, “Hello? Anyone in there?” Evan jumped back as a flame lit up the cave. Inside the tunnel, Evan saw two dwarfs. Both were about up to Evan’s waist. They were both carrying small, wooden staffs which had thin vines spun around them. On the top of each staff was a gemstone. One was red. The other was green.

“Hey! You must be Evan,” one of the dwarfs said. Evan carried on examining the dwarfs as he answered, “Yes, that’s right.” The dwarfs were both wearing dark green and brown clothes and black leather boots.

“Oh, good. We’re glad you’re here,” one replied.

“Follow us,” the other dwarf said.

One of the dwarfs was holding a wooden torch, which was creating the light. The flame flickered wildly from the breeze outside. Evan walked down the tunnel, following the two dwarfs. As the tunnel entrance went out of view, Evan carried on with hesitance. There were now torches on the cold, grey stone walls. The dwarf carrying the torch placed it on the wall, where there was a holder free.

They came to a large cavern and one of the dwarfs shouted, “He’s here!” Evan looked around the cavern. There were about twenty dwarfs inside, all sitting on large rocks. There was another tunnel leading from the cavern, but it was blocked with a large boulder.

A dwarf, who was clothed differently in light orange, his staff bigger with a larger gemstone on the top, stood up and walked towards Evan. Evan realised he must be the leader. “Evan, we need your help. For years and years we dwarfs have mined for diamonds, but the beasts have ravaged our mines! This is as far down the mines we dare go, and there are no more diamonds here, only further down there.” The dwarf pointed towards the blocked up tunnel. “But anytime we go down there, well, you can imagine. We blocked it up so they couldn’t come up, but we’re losing business. We need your help!”

Evan gulped, “Well, I’ll try.”

“Good. Thank you. You can take these two dwarfs down with you for help.”

The twenty or so dwarfs rolled the heavy boulder out of the way and Evan and the two dwarfs walked into the tunnel. As soon as they were in the tunnel, the dwarfs blocked the entrance again. They were plunged into darkness.

“I can’t see!” Evan shouted.

“Wait. I have a torch,” one dwarf said.

For a couple of seconds they remained in darkness, and then there was a sudden flash of light as the dwarf lit the torch.

“ARRGHH!” the dwarf next to Evan screamed. Evan turned quickly and saw a pair of white, beady eyes looking at him. The two dwarfs ran around Evan like children, screaming

frantically. Evan plunged his hand onto his belt and pulled the short sword out. The beast dived at Evan, but he swung the sword just in time and the beast landed on the sharp-edged metal and fell to the ground.

The dwarfs realised how cowardly they looked. “Yes, umm, well done, Evan,” one said. “I was just about to kill him,” the other replied.

Evan thought to himself how pitiful these dwarfs were.

“Come on. Let’s carry on,” Evan said.

Evan and the dwarfs didn’t encounter anymore beasts for about twenty minutes, and they were getting deeper and deeper into the mine. Evan stopped and the dwarfs stopped, too. Evan pulled the crossbow off his back and loaded it with a bolt. He carried on walking.

There was a turn up ahead, and as they approached it, a beast dived round the corner. Once again the dwarfs began screaming. Evan fired his crossbow and hit the beast in the neck. It fell straight to the ground.

“I was just about to…,” one dwarf said, but Evan interrupted, “Save it.”

As Evan came to another corner, he stood next to the wall. “Evan, Evan!” one dwarf whispered while tugging on Evan’s shirt. “That’s the main cavern round there.”

“You stay back,” Evan said while pushing the little dwarf on the chest.

“Yes, good idea.” The dwarfs ran a couple of metres back up the tunnel.

Evan loaded another bolt into his crossbow and took the last potion out of his rucksack. He jumped round the corner and was shocked for a moment at the beasts. There were at least thirty of them in the huge cavern. The walls of the cavern were coated in shining gemstones.

As the beasts spotted Evan, they all began to howl, and a few ran towards him growling. Evan fired a bolt and it missed altogether. He quickly loaded another and fired. He hit one of the beasts in the leg and it fell to the ground in agony. The beasts were getting closer to him, and Evan knew he couldn’t hold them all off, He threw the potion as far to the back of the cavern as he could. He stayed long enough to see it smash on the stone wall and the red mist begin to seep out. He ran back down the tunnel.

“Run, run!” Evan shouted at the two dwarfs who were standing in the tunnel. They turned and ran up the tunnel towards the entrance. Evan turned his head to see five beasts dive round the corner and begin running towards them.

As Evan and the dwarfs ran further up the tunnel, the red mist began to slowly float around the corner, too. The little dwarfs couldn’t run very fast and Evan pushed them along, trying to make them go faster. One beast ran faster than the others did and he was catching up to Evan. The deadly red mist caught the slow beasts up and they were killed instantly, but the other beast was still in front of the mist.

The dwarfs screamed. “Help! I can’t go on!” one shouted.

“Keep going!” Evan urged.

They all ran through the tunnel, and Evan did a fire ball spell while he was running. The fireball in his hand was about the size of an apple. He threw it behind him, but the beast dodged it and it flew into the pursuing mist.

Suddenly one of the dwarfs tripped on a rock and fell. Evan shot past but then stopped as fast as he could. The beast caught up with the fallen dwarf and dived at him. The dwarf swung his staff and hit the beast in the head. Evan ran back to the dwarf on the floor. He pulled out his sword and slashed at the beast.

“Go, go!” Evan urged the dwarf. He stood up and carried on running. Evan battled with the beast, slashing, and stabbing. The mist was also catching up behind the beast and Evan.

The mist engulfed the beast and almost got Evan, but he managed to jump to his feet just in time. Evan ran to catch up with the two dwarfs. Evan was gasping for air as he ran.

“Keep going. we’re almost there!” Evan shouted ahead. The beasts had been killed, but the danger was the noxious mist behind them.

Eventually the tired three reached the boulder. They banged on it with their fists.

“Let us out!” Evan screamed. He looked back. The mist was almost upon them.

“Please, let me out. It’s us!” one of the dwarfs shouted, brutally hammering his fists on the boulder.

Just as the mist was about to engulf them, the boulder flew back and they dived into the small cavern.

“Block it, block it!” Evan shouted, as the mist was still coming. The dwarfs pushed the boulder back in place just in time. Evan and the two dwarfs fell to the ground gasping for air.

“You did it?” the leader of the dwarfs asked.

“Yes, the beasts are dead,” Evan panted.

“Oh, we can’t thank you enough!” the leader shouted.

“That mist will disappear soon. Then you can go back down and continue mining,” Evan said, still slumped on the stone ground.

The leader took his staff and put his hand around the large, green gemstone. He pulled it off and handed it to Evan. Evan stared at the green gem. It sparkled and glinted.

“This will help you. When you need it most, it will help you, just as you did for us,” the leader said. “Thank you.”

The Knights of the Square Table

by Stephen Sokolowski

Chapter 16

"Terringrama!" Dave exclaimed. Christopher was speechless. Anthony, who obviously had no idea what was happening, looked toward Dave and Christopher expectantly. None of the figures moved a muscle, and their faces were stone.

"This..." Christopher stuttered and struggled to continue. "This is what remains of Terringrama, the city that vanished twenty-five years ago?"

The figures appeared to confer with each other, and silence reigned over the cavern. Finally, the first spoke.

"In a way, yes. We have much to explain. Please come with us."

Christopher immediately stepped in front of the other two and rushed forward to follow the others. Dave, who was feeling dizzy at the moment, followed closely behind, while Anthony took the rear.

As Dave walked with the strange figures toward the back of the cavern, he began to feel sick. Without warning, he suddenly collapsed, and Christopher and Anthony rushed toward him. The figures surrounded them, ever-watchful.

The leader pulled his hand from the box slowly, scraping the scrap of rough paper against the wooden side. The unreal silence made every sound in the room seem as loud as if the spectators were standing under a waterfall.

"I'm sorry..." the leader said, and everyone stopped. He held out the paper for everyone to see. The large printing, as far as Dave could see, clearly read a name. Somehow, Dave knew that the word written on the paper was his name, and he suddenly became fearful. All around, faces turned toward him, looking pitifully at him from a thousand directions.

Before he could back away, strong arms gripped him from behind. He struggled to get away, but a realization finally came to him: the guards had locked the doors so that the one who was chosen would be unable to escape.

As he struggled in the opposite direction, the guards slowly pulled him toward the strange podium, which appeared to be controlled somehow by an invisible energy. It slowly lowered to the floor. The guards dragged Dave to the table. Giving one last valiant effort to escape, Dave stopped struggling as the guards restrained him with the metal clamps that extended from the table.

From his vantage point, Dave could see that the table was rising upward. It settled smoothly to a stop above the congregation gathered below. Though Dave could not see them, he knew that every eye was upon him.

The domed ceiling above Dave began to open slowly, exposing the sky above. Dark clouds swirled in the high reaches of the atmosphere, like those of a huge storm that would break at any minute.

From above, he heard a voice calling to him in his mind. "You have one hour. Confess the location of the artifact to me or you will die."

“I will never betray my neighbors,” a thought came from Dave. Dave didn’t think the thought, but he had a sensation as if he were just a passenger in his own body, watching the dream unfold before him.

“Just say where the stone is,” the voice goaded him. “You will be given power beyond all comprehension. You will rule the world, and be the most powerful entity in existence, besides me of course.”

“Never!” Dave thought or heard himself think.

“Let me show you what it will be like,” the voice told him, and he convulsed. Images flashed through his mind–his long-lost family, his friends killed in the troll attacks, his old farmhouse restored to the way it used to be. Freedom to do whatever he chose without fear of retribution by a greater force. Immortality and no worries in the world, except obeying his master. Suddenly, he was back in his own body again, still shaking from the experience.

“Fifty-two have died on this table,” the voice called. “I have searched for a year to find the one who will serve me. Don’t pass up the opportunity.”

“I don’t know...,” Dave thought, now uncertain of his resolve. “The villagers--they won’t survive. I won’t be the one to turn them over to your tortures!”

“Now you’re worried about those *people* down there,” the voice thought. “Those *people* were the ones who chose you through their lottery. They were the ones who put you up here on this device, expecting you to hand your life over for their good. They expect you to let yourself be killed so that they, who were responsible for your death, can live on in their shielded village.” No! Everyone knew they might be the next one to be chosen! It was a game of luck!”

“Do you really think that? Have any of the elders been chosen for this *game*? Have you seen anyone with even a scrap of authority chosen to die here on the pedestal? They don’t choose their victims by chance! They arranged the order long ago, so that they would live the longest. While they preached about how important it was that you not confess, the hypocrites were scheming to save their turns until the very last, hoping that they would survive at the expense of the rest of you!”

“I....”

“But they will die like the rest of you. Eventually, someone will break, and Terringrama will be liberated, and all its residents will know the rule of my law! All the blood that has poured from this table will be in vain once the secret is confessed!”

“The elders wouldn’t do such a thing! They won’t sacrifice us to the likes of you!”

“They would, and they are,” said the voice. “Do you believe that they will die just like the rest of you? After everyone has perished, they will confess and gain the privileges that you were just promised!”

Dave didn’t know what to say. The echo in his mind was becoming more panicked as he spoke. The dome above him began to grow brighter, as if it were a magic stone preparing to discharge its power.

“My, my!” the voice laughed sarcastically. “Look at the time! There’s only a few minutes left! Looks like decision time! Die, and your death will be in vain. Or you can tell me where the shield artifact is and liberate your village to the rule of my law, which is fair above all else. You’d better decide quickly, though.”

Dave looked down at the ground below him. Pitiful faces looked up at him and looked away when they saw his head over the side. Though he couldn’t move far enough to see the

rest of the village council, he could see the mayor, looking up at Dave, nearly expressionless. While faces around him were moved in pity, the mayor's face showed no emotion.

"See?" the voice said. "They want you to die up here, so that they can live for another week, and eventually reap the rewards that you were promised. Get your revenge on those uncaring thieves of lives! Just tell me where the artifact is located, and you'll never have to worry about anything again."

Dave's dream-self's heart was racing as the light of the dome above him became brilliantly bright. A low rumble began in the depths of the earth, shaking the building. What should he do? Betray his friends? Were they his friends? Confess the truth? Did he know the truth? What would happen to them? Would he receive those things that were promised him? Did he want to receive those things that were promised him? What–

"This is your last chance," the voice said in his head. "I hope you make the right decision."

Hesitating for an instant, Dave finally said, "Five miles east of the settlement. The artifact is buried in the cliff, about 100 feet above the ground, and four feet inside the rocks. There are several saplings planted over the site."

The rumbling stopped abruptly. The light in the dome and the murmurs of the spectators below ceased to exist. The silence was so great that Dave could hear their breathing. Shocked faces looked up at him. Suddenly, there was a jerk, and the pedestal began to rise up, toward the dome above him. Passing *through* the dome, Dave emerged into the open air, where a man clad in black holding a glowing stone was waiting.

The man looked toward Dave as soon as he emerged. Immediately, the clamps sprung free, and Dave stood up. It was just then that the strange glow that had penetrated the village vanished. There was a collective scream from inside the dome, and then the glow surrounded the dome as the man began to utter strange incantations.

"You have chosen right, my friend," the man said. "Don't worry about what's going on inside. We'll talk about your reward later, but first we must retrieve the Falchion."

Dave was feeling dizzy . . ..

Suddenly, Dave's head was clear, and he opened his eyes. Christopher stood above, looking at him with concern. The figures stood around. One snapped his fingers, and he turned into what appeared to be a normal man. They had been talking with Christopher when they suddenly noticed Dave's awakening. Turning toward Dave, they asked with anxious voices whether he had fallen ill.

"I'm fine," Dave said, feeling completely normal for the first time since he had fainted.

"That's good to hear, since you were out cold for well over an hour," Christopher said. "Was it another vision?"

Dave hesitated. With all the Terringrama townsfolk standing around him, saying anything about his vision might anger the people, which is not what was needed at the moment. Besides, something that had been said during the dream wasn't quite right...

"Let's accept their hospitality, Christopher," Dave said.

Before Christopher could protest, the townsfolk said, "Please follow us." They moved off into the distance of the cavern, toward what appeared to be a series of houses. Going inside

one of the closest, two of the townsfolk, who appeared to be the leaders of the village, sat down on the couches inside the spacious livingroom.

"I am very interested in hearing your story," Dave said. "I had heard rumors of Terringrama but had never imagined that there was an entire civilization living underground here."

"Allow me to introduce myself - your friend Christopher and I talked earlier - I am Ipschan, the mayor of the 2nd City of Terringrama."

"The second city?" Dave asked. "Then the stories are true."

"Indeed," the other in the room began. "But first allow-"

Suddenly, there was a loud crash, and the ground began to rumble. Rising up in the blink of an eye, the mayor rushed out the door of his abode to witness the commotion that was occurring outside.

"Something is happening!" Christopher exclaimed, and jumped out of his seat to get a look. Outside, in the middle of the large open space, rocks dislodged from the ceiling and crashed to the ground.

"We must leave the cavern. Something is causing it to weaken from above," Ipschan said.

"Yavin," Dave exclaimed. "His troops were chasing us in the snow, when we managed to find safety inside this passage. He may be casting a spell on us from above."

"If that is so, the time required to affect such a large mass of rock would be great, but not so great as to allow us to escape with ease. We have time, but we must hurry," Christopher said.

"Very well," the mayor said. "For the time being, I and as many of the townsfolk as possible will assist you. If we don't band together, neither group stands a chance when we reach the outside world."

"How many people?" Christopher asked.

"There are currently ten thousand and forty-seven residents, of which approximately six thousand will be able to assist in your defense."

"Six thousand?!" Christopher asked in a state of disbelief. "That number will almost double our forces!"

"Indeed," Ipschan said. "We have not traveled outside the caves in almost twenty-five years. We'll need your guidance."

Reaching into his pocket, the mayor produced a small whistle. Blowing three short bursts and one long one produced a cry throughout the village. Within minutes, the people were lining up in orderly rows around Dave, Christopher, and Ipschan.

"The rest will have to catch up," Ipschan said, looking toward the ceiling, from which dust was raining down upon the crowd that had gathered. "Lead the way."

Setting a moderate pace, Christopher led the vast crowd through the network of tunnels. At times, obstructions of dust and small debris littered the path, adding precious seconds to their journey. The dull rumbling beneath them continued to increase.

It was almost three hours later when the group finally reached the strangely illuminated cavern where the army had been positioned. Katie and Chapin, waiting by the door to the cavern, greeted them immediately.

“The lights in the room aren’t going to hold. We’ll need to hurry if we’re to have any chance of escaping,” Chapin said quickly. As if on cue, the room plunged into darkness but became bright again just a few seconds later.

“Yavin is casting a spell to bring the mountain down on top of us,” Christopher explained. “The magic is interfering with whatever forces are at work right here. There’s no time to explain. Get the soldiers ready to march and help the others behind me prepare as well.”

Five minutes later, the twelve thousand men set out through the third path that led from the room. Having no idea where it led, Christopher walked in front. The group was helped by the wide girth of the tunnel, where, at times, five men could walk abreast in comfort, if it were possible to be comfortable with debris scattered everywhere and the thought of impending death. Eventually, the debris became such a problem that the army was forced to march first four in a row, then three, until eventually single-file was the only option. The tunnel began to slope upward and turn back toward the direction from which they had come.

“Are you sure that we chose the right path?” Dave asked Christopher as the two were walking behind one another up the steep incline.

“It’s too late to go back now. We either chose the right one, or we die,” Christopher said grimly. “If this path does lead to an exit, it will be on the side of the mountain facing away from Yavin’s territory. It might allow us to hide ourselves from the assault of the calks or whatever attacked us before, as well as whoever is casting the spell.”

Not an hour later, as the rumbling became deafening and the mountain seemed as if it were about to shake itself down into the center of the earth, a pinpoint of light shone in the distance. As Christopher reached the light, the noise stopped.

“They couldn’t have stopped already,” he muttered. “Yavin has to know that the mountain didn’t collapse yet. Why then-“

”Hurry!” said Dave. “He knows that we would think that and let our guard down. He’s planning an even greater assault!”

“Move!” Christopher yelled, and men began pouring from the opening. “Move!”

Tense moments passed as the soldiers filed out of the cave onto the cold, snow-covered slope. Chapin and Katie, who were at the very end of the long line, were on Dave’s mind every second.

As soon as the stragglers, including Chapin and Katie, had cleared the cave, a bright flash of light lit the sky for miles around, and the ground jerked. Without warning, Dave was on his back in the snow. The ground had suddenly *shifted* down a few feet. He felt sharp rocks beneath him and offered a prayer of thanks that there was snow cover.

The knights, townsfolk, and five companions picked themselves up from the ground. Most of the knights had suffered only minor injuries. Their vantage point was above the treeline, so Dave had a full view of the terrain over which they had traveled prior to entering the caves. Below them, rocks, trees, boulders of snow, and other rubble from the avalanche and from the catastrophe that just occurred was piled up on the side of the mountain. It would be years before anything of consequence grew on this particular mountain again, but it would be more than a lifetime if Yavin had his way.

“From this point, everyone within ten miles can see us clearly in the day,” Dave said to Chapin, who was climbing up the hill behind him. Tony stumbled on the slippery mountainside as he followed.

“He is right,” Tony said, approaching the party. “However, if anyone wanted to find us, they would have already. We’ve been standing here for at least fifteen minutes, and the calks surely were ordered to search the mountain before the cave-in.”

“The best course of action would be to camp just below the crest,” Christopher added, joining the conversation. “If we hide there, we won’t be visible from the fortress side and will have the opportunity to attack or retreat quickly if necessary.”

“Very well,” Tony said, looking down the mountainside at Ipschan, who was conferring with some of the townsfolk.

Ordering the others to follow, Tony began the long trek up the mountain. The going was rough, as the shakedown of the mountain had created loose gravel and even large boulders everywhere that threatened to crush those who made a wrong move. At one point, the path wound around the summit of the mountain, with less than three feet of loose dirt standing between the near-vertical rock wall and their doom.

On the way up the mountain, Dave met first with Ipschan, who promised to tell the rest of the story when they reached the top. He then exchanged a few words with Mike, who was anxious about the days to come, and with Tony, with whom he had not really had a chance to compare notes during their twenty-five year separation.

As they approached the top of the mountain, Christopher warned everyone to stay at least a hundred feet below the summit and to make camp while he and Dave scouted the path ahead.

The last few feet seemed to be the hardest, but Dave knew that his imagination and the fatigue caused from the long walk had fooled his mind. He knew that what the party had first set out to conquer almost twenty-five years ago lay less than a mile away in the valley between the mountains. Anxiety welled up inside him as he imagined the fortress.

The sight that unfolded before Christopher and Dave was nothing as they had imagined. Below them, a thick fog obscured their vision, but the tall towers of a pitch black edifice rose through the fog. The silence was palpable. Nothing moved in the valley below them. It was almost as if Death itself seemed to reside in the depths of the fog below.