Shoemaker Village

Volume 18 - May 1998

EXTENDED *DISCUSSION FORUM* THIS MONTH! 4 ARTICLES ON EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES!



The Knights of the Square Table move closer to their enemy! 7 pages this month!

SPECIAL SHORT STORY: *One Moment*

Shoemaker Village celebrates one year anniversary!

Special 2-part mystery short story enclosed!

Spring Events in Neighborhood News!

New Puzzle Page included!

Expanded Comedy Central - 4 Pages!

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Editor's Page

Information you should know

Welcome to the May issue of *Shoemaker Village*! We'd like to tell you now that the *Village* will be one year old on Mothers' Day, 1998! We thank our readers for supporting the *Village* throughout the past year, and we hope that we will be able to continue the *Village* for another year!

First, you may have remembered that we announced last month that the 1997 Best Article of the Year Award Voting results would be published in this issue. Unfortunately, due to the lack of response from our subscribers, we will not be able to bring you the results because there was an insufficient number of votes counted. We had hoped that we would be able to print the winner in this issue for our one year anniversary, but due to this, we will instead be reprinting the best article as voted by our staff and a few others.

Also this month, *The Knights of the Square Table* continues, bringing you more of this excellent story. Be sure to read it - you won't want to miss out on what will happen next! We have included as a bonus a two-part story contributed by one of our story writers, entitled Terror in the Wall. This story will be continued in the June issue of *Shoemaker Village*. *The Tomb of the Unknown World*, which debuted in April's issue, is not included in this issue due to excessive homework. However, we hope to continue this next month. If you missed out on the first few chapters of these stories, send us a letter and we will enclose a free copy of whatever story or back issue you want. You can also visit the *Village* web pages at **http://members.aol.com/ShoeVill** or E-Mail us at **ShoeVill@aol.com**.

We will also be bringing you two Super Bonus Issues in August and September for the summer months. This is due to the time that our editors will have to publish these issues during the summer. If you would like to help make these issues possible, please send an article to the address on the Acknowledgments page soon. An additional note - the August issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on July 9 due to vacations on which two of our editors' families will be embarking.

As usual, we have enclosed the best short stories possible. However, with the absence of stories from Christopher Sokolowski, we now have an **extreme shortage of short stories**! Without your contributions, we will be unable to publish any short stories in next month's issue of *Shoemaker Village*! Remember, if you contribute a story, you will be given a free three-month subscription to the *Village*. If anybody would like to contribute an editorial, please look on the Acknowledgments page for the topic for next month's Discussion Forum. News Articles are also needed - there's no way we can know all the news in the neighborhood unless you tell us!

You may also have received a letter during the past month requesting that you subscribe to the *Village* by contributing $4.00. If so, this is **your last issue of the *Village*!** We hope that we can continue publishing the *Village* for you. As you may already know, $4.00 is less than 1/4 of the price for a subscription that length. Please help us by renewing as soon as possible!

That's all we have to say for this month! Enjoy this issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

Acknowledgments

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New subscribers this month

The Lynch Family

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, May 29, 1998
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Tuesday, May 26, 1998.

Next month's topic in The Discussion Forum will be *Summer Vacation in our Schools*

Coming Next Issue

Volume 19- June 1998

Summertime is approaching! Catch all the important events for the end of the school year in Neighborhood News!
The conclusion to Terror in the Wall! You won't want to miss that!
The action in *The Tomb of the Unknown World* is starting to build up! Be sure you don't miss next month!!
A big battle happens in *The Knights of the Square Table*!
More great stories, news, comedy, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Puzzle Page

J	E	A	N	S	O	K	O	L	O	W	S	K	I	A
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Neighborhood News

May 1998

PIONEER ROAD CONSTRUCTION HALTED

After vigorous construction work on Pioneer Road near the end of March, work slacked off in the beginning of April. However, it started up again on April 21.

Pioneer Road was closed from Frontier to Davisville to allow for the beginning of utility work.

On Wednesday, April 15, 1998, Pioneer Road residents received letters regarding the planned renovations on Pioneer Road. Neighbors living on the far side will be required to pay the full price for new curbing, estimated currently at about $12.00 a foot.

Sewer work is to be completed within the next month also, this time by installing new drains to allow for the grading of the road that is planned later in the project. The project will be completed near the end of the school year, when the road will be completely repaved to repair potholes.

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April 14, 1998

Dear Resident of Pioneer Road:

On March 16, 1998, the Township notified you that the reconstruction of Pioneer Road would be beginning this year and most of the clearing and grading has been done in anticipation of PECO Energy installing a gas line on the south side of the road. In that original letter, we indicated to you that new curbing would be installed but no mention was made of who was going to pay for it.

Under the current Township policy, if no curbing currently exists, the costs are 100% assessable to the property owner and this policy will be followed for this construction job. If you currently have curbing on your property and any deficiencies from the code are noted, you will be liable for 50% of the cost for replacing the defective curbing. The Contractor price for the curbing is $11.75 per linear foot. which is considerably cheaper than the $18.50 we paid in 1997. The Township has also been able to conclude discussions with Montgomery County, who is financing this project with an infrastructure loan, which affords us the opportunity to borrow the money for this project for a ten year period with a zero interest rate on our loan. The Township will be happy to grant each of you along Pioneer Road the same financing on your bill for the curbing along the front of your property.

Once the work has been completed and accepted by the Township, billing for the curbing will be sent out by the Township. If you have a large frontage, the bill could be considerable but you may contact the Township Finance Department (% Patricia Burns), and we will work out a time payment schedule with you that will run up to ten years and no finance charges will be imposed. This is contrary to the current Township finance arrangements, but the Board is happy to make this financing arrangement, a better one for the residents along Pioneer Road.

If you have any questions, please call my office. Thank you.

Yours truly,
Brian L. Mook
Township Manager

Equal Opportunity Employer

This letter was received by all residents of Pioneer Road.

GOLF OUTING POSTPONED

The annual neighborhood golf outing, which was originally planned for early May, has been postponed to the fall.

Henry Sokolowski and Mr. Lagreca made this decision on April 6, Henry stating "Everybody was busy, and we would have had to postpone it until near the end of May, and then it was getting toward Memorial Day and the end of school, so we just decided to postpone it until the fall."

The outing is now scheduled to take place in mid-September.

UPPER MORELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT CALENDAR RELEASED

The Upper Moreland School District has released a calendar for the 1998-1999 school year.

The calendar was released on March 23, 1998, at the March School Board Meeting. It contains 180 days, just enough to meet the Pennsylvania School Requirements. The starting and ending dates are average (September 10 - June 18), while Christmas Vacation will last for 12 days, the second longest possible vacation. There are apparently no snow days incorporated into the school year, because of the lack of snow for the past two years. These days will be made up on Monday through Thursday of Holy Week, if necessary.

This school year will end on June 19, average for the school district. This may be subject to change because of the lack of snow experienced this year. (In past years, four snow days have been added into the year to be subtracted if there were no snow.) If this were to occur, all Upper Moreland School District students would be released on June 15, an

unprecedented early end. (Round Meadow, which recently had its ending date changed to June 17 due to summer construction, would only lose two days).

Only time will tell if these days will be taken off, but as neighbor Tim Hoffman, a Physics teacher in the district, says, “I don’t know if they’ll even give you that.”

SEMI-ANNUAL YARD SALE TO BE HELD THIS MONTH

The Neighborhood Yard Sale, which has been held for the past four years in the Spring and Fall, will be held on the weekend of May 2 and 3 this year.

The Sale has been organized by various neighbors in the past years, with Joan Lynch eventually taking over as leader. She is joined this year by Mindy Torjman, a neighbor living on Acorn Place.

Past years have shown an increase in the number of customers attending the yard sales, originally organized by the Curry Family before they moved in 1994.

If you would like to be a part of the yard sale, and you live in the neighborhood, you do not have to pay for permits this Spring. This is a change since last year, when each participant was required to pay $5.00. The township office changed its policy as of last summer, requiring only one permit for the entire neighborhood.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-The annual OLGC carnival has not been announced as of yet, leading most people to believe that it will not be held again this year. As you may recall, the carnival was canceled last year due to the organizer deciding not to participate.

-The SuperFresh supermarket was robbed on Wednesday, April 22, 1998, as neighbor Jean Sokolowski watched. “They just ran out,” she said. “Carrying a basket of food.” The robber jumped into a waiting car and departed the scene, leaving no trace of his presence except the missing inventory.

Going to the Dogz

DOG NEWS THIS MONTH

-Klaus, the Hoffmans’ dog, recently got into more trouble this month, by eating some dog bones put aside for Easter weekend when the Sokolowski family were supposed to feed him. Reportedly, Klaus tore up the bag, which was on the other side of a porch rail, and ate a box of dog bones. Although Klaus is fine now, Jean Sokolowski, who was feeding him, said, “I was shocked! That son of a gun!”

Buster, who has not been seen for several months, was seen on April 15 lugging behind his master.

Comedy Central

50 FUN THINGS TO DO IN AN ELEVATOR

Make race car noises when anyone gets on or off.

Blow your nose and offer to show the contents of your Kleenex to other passengers

Grimace painfully while smacking your forehead and muttering, "Shut up, darnit, all of you just shut UP!"

Whistle the first seven notes of "It's a Small World" incessantly.

Sell Girl Scout cookies.

On a long ride, sway side to side at the natural frequency of the elevator.

Shave.

Crack open your briefcase or purse, and while peering inside ask: "Got enough air in there?"

Offer name tags to everyone getting on the elevator. Wear yours upside-down.

Stand silent and motionless in the corner, facing the wall, without getting off.

When arriving at your floor, grunt and strain to yank the doors open, then act embarrassed when they open by themselves.

Lean over to another passenger and whisper: "Noogie patrol coming!"

Greet everyone getting on the elevator with a warm handshake and ask them to call you Admiral.

One word: Flatulants!

On the highest floor, hold the door open and demand that it stay open until you hear the penny you dropped down the shaft go "plink" at the bottom.

Do Tai Chi exercises.

Stare, grinning, at another passenger for a while, and then announce: "I've got new socks on!"

When at least 8 people have boarded, moan from the back, "Oh, not now, darn motion sickness!"

Give religious tracts to each passenger.

Meow occasionally.

Bet the other passengers you can fit a quarter in your nose.

Frown and mutter "gotta go, gotta go" then sigh and say "oops!"

Show other passengers a wound and ask if it looks infected.

Sing "Mary had a little lamb" while continually pushing buttons.

Holler "Chutes away!" whenever the elevator descends.

Walk on with a cooler that says "human head" on the side.

Stare at another passenger for a while, then announce, "You're one of THEM!" and move to the far corner of the elevator.

Burp, and then say "mmmm...tasty!"

Leave a box between the doors.

Ask each passenger getting on if you can push the button for them.

Wear a puppet on your hand and talk to other passengers "through" it.

Start a sing-along.

When the elevator is silent, look around and ask "Is that your beeper?"

Play the harmonica.

Shadow box.

Say "Ding!" at each floor.

Lean against the button panel.

Say "I wonder what all these do" and push the red buttons.

Listen to the elevator walls with a stethoscope.

Draw a little square on the floor with chalk and announce to the other passengers that this is your "personal space."

Bring a chair along.

Take a bite of a sandwich and ask another passenger: "Wanna see wha in muh mouf?"

Blow spit bubbles.

Pull your gum out of your mouth in long strings.

Announce in a demonic voice: "I must find a more suitable host body."

Carry a blanket and clutch it protectively.

Make explosion noises when anyone presses a button.

Wear "X-Ray Specs" and leer suggestively at other passengers.

Stare at your thumb and say "I think it's getting larger."

If anyone brushes against you, recoil and holler "Bad touch!"

25 FUN THINGS TO DO DURING AN EXAM

1. Bring a pillow. Fall asleep (or pretend to) until the last 15 minutes. Wake up, say "oh geez, better get cracking" and do some gibberish work. Turn it in a few minutes early.

2. Get a copy of the exam, run out screaming "Andre, Andre, I've got the secret documents!!"

3. If it is a math/science exam, answer in essay form. If it is a long answer/essay form, answer with numbers and symbols. Be creative. Use the integral symbol.

4. Make paper airplanes out of the exam. Aim them at the instructor's left nostril.

5. Talk the entire way through the exam. Read questions aloud, debate your answers with yourself out loud. If asked to stop, yell out, "I'm SOOO sure you can hear me thinking." Then start talking about what a jerk the instructor is.

6. Bring cheerleaders.

7. Walk in, get the exam, sit down. About five minutes into it, loudly say to the instructor, "I don't understand ANY of this. I've been to every lecture all semester long! What's the deal? And who are you? Where's the regular guy?"

8. Bring a Game Boy (or Game Gear, etc...). Play with the volume at max level.

9. On the answer sheet (book, whatever) find a new, interesting way to refuse to answer every question. For example: I refuse to answer this question on the grounds that it conflicts with my religious beliefs. Be creative.

10. Bring pets.

11. Run into the exam room looking about frantically. Breathe a sigh of relief. Go to the instructor, say "They've found me, I have to leave the country" and run off.

12. Fifteen minutes into the exam, stand up, rip up all the papers into very small pieces, throw them into the air and yell out "Merry Christmas." If you're really daring, ask for another copy of the exam. Say you lost the first one. Repeat this process every fifteen minutes.

13. Do the exam with crayons, paint, or fluorescent markers.

14. Come into the exam wearing slippers, a bathrobe, a towel on your head, and nothing else.

15. Come down with a BAD case of Turet's Syndrome during the exam. Be as vulgar as possible.

16. Do the entire exam in another language. If you don't know one, make one up! For math/science exams, try using Roman numerals.

17. Bring things to throw at the instructor when s/he's not looking. Blame it on the person nearest to you.

18. As soon as the instructor hands you the exam, eat it.

19. Walk into the exam with an entourage. Claim you are going to be taping your next video during the exam. Try to get the instructor to let them stay. Be persuasive. Tell the instructor to expect a percentage of the profits if they are

allowed to stay.

20. Every five minutes, stand up, collect all your things, move to another seat, continue with the exam.

21. Turn in the exam approximately 30 minutes into it. As you walk out, start commenting on how easy it was.

22. Do the entire exam as if it were multiple choice and true/false. If it is a multiple choice exam, spell out interesting things (DCCAB. BABE. etc.).

23. Bring a black marker. Return the exam with all questions and answers completely blacked out.

24. Get the exam. Twenty minutes into it, throw your papers down violently, scream out "No Way!" and walk out triumphantly.

25. Arrange a protest before the exam starts (i.e., threaten the instructor that whether or not everyone's done, they are all leaving after one hour.)

Extracurricular Activities

I think teachers put too much emphasis on extracurricular activities. A lot of times, teachers stress the importance of extracurricular activities. They forget that the real reason that students attend school is to get a good education and prepare for college. If you get honor roll (it doesn't matter if it is regular or distinguished) every marking period, and you are on the basketball team, the Key Club, and are a member of National Honor Society, you could be considered a well-rounded student. It seems as if teachers are happier when you go out for three or four clubs and teams rather than get an "A" on a test. I don't usually go out for teams and clubs because I want to get a good education and get into a good college. You can call me old-fashioned, but kids need a good education. If they don't get a good education, how else are they going to succeed in today's strenuous job market? I salute the kids that can hold down three extracurricular activities, pull a straight "A" average, and even hold down an after-school job. As I said, teachers put too much stress on extracurricular activities; kids need to have fun. How is it possible for us to have fun while we are being smothered by teachers about joining the Key Club, the basketball team, the French Club (of which I am one of only four or five happy members), or the football team? Teachers need to back off when it comes to extracurricular activities. High school students range in age from fourteen to eighteen. We are old enough to make our own decisions; we don't need teachers getting in our way. We also know that colleges and universities not only look at grades but also extracurricular activities and community service in someone's spare time. All that we ask from teachers and our parents is to let us make our own choices. I'm happy to say my mother doesn't put a lot of stress on me. She basically says that if you want to do something; go out for an activity, it's fine with her.

Extracurricular Activities

One of the many problems in today's schools is the stress that is placed on extracurricular activities. This needs to be changed to ensure a better education for our children.

Extracurricular activities are named so because they should be voluntary and not part of the curriculum. However, teachers continue to stress activities as more important than education in some classes. For example, I had a Math teacher during the first semester of this school year. This teacher was obsessed with extracurricular activities. Many times he went on thirty- to sixty-minute side trips about the value of extracurricular activities in schools or past star athletes he coached. He also frequently compared Geometry to activities, which isn't bad in itself, but sometimes he went on more about the activities than the math involved in the comparison. And there were also the times when I walked into class to discover that, yet again, he was drawing basketball diagrams on the board to show a student plays to improve her game. Sometimes he would go five minutes into the class period to continue his lecture while the rest of the class goofed off.

Activities should be fun. However, teachers, parents, and colleges stress that you should be involved so much that it isn't fun anymore. The programs should be offered voluntarily to the student to partake in if they enjoy the club or sport, not as a requirement for college admissions or something good to put on your resume. Some people don't even look at grades anymore, but just examine the activities the applicant participated in. This is wrong.

Another thing that is wrong is how students that participate in activities are permitted to leave early from school on most days to prepare for their games. Granted, I have computer class last in the day, and I see people leaving often. But what if I had English, Math, or the worst you could possibly get, Biology? Do you think that the Biology teacher, who you should have an idea by now about her meanness, would let her students leave HER CLASS early to participate in sports? (One day, somebody had a note to go to the office during her period. She refused to let him go. When somebody told me to go

see the guidance counselor the next day, I didn't go. I'd rather face the school than her. [If you haven't heard of her before, this should give you an idea.]) And not just her class. There are many other classes where the teachers might not yell, but expect their students to make up their work, and 30 minutes with this intensive scheduling is a lot.

As you can see, extracurricular activities should remain extracurricular and not be included as a requirement in schools.

Academics First

Extracurricular activities are good. They promote fitness, self-confidence, and a healthy sense of belonging. Extracurricular activities are just plain fun. They bring a heightened sense of pride and increased school spirit. Colleges look for well-rounded students, those involved with more than just textbooks. But there's the catch--the word "student"! Let us not forget that the foremost priority in any school should be education. I agree that there is nothing more thrilling than a well-played sports event. When your own child is part of the activity, the pride is indescribable. Unfortunately, unless one is as exceptional as Michael Jordan, most kids don't get to pursue a multi-million dollar sports career. So they should depend instead upon acquiring the knowledge that will help them find their place in the world; i.e., the employment that helps them put food on their plates. The sad part is that many teachers/coaches get caught up in making their school teams #1 instead of making their students #1! It is not fair to the students, and it is certainly not what the "education first" parents want for their children. Those who are in a position to positively influence the future of students should think of them as students first and athletes second.

Not Fair Play

If we are to question the value of extracurricular activities in the lives of young people, we ultimately get back to the declining system of education in America. In some ways, there is too much emphasis on extracurricular activities--especially sports. It is a rare case for a parent to force their child into a sport to live out some kind of dream that they never fulfilled as a child, but the driving force inside us all to win can be taken too far. Back in the day, you know, when kids respected their elders and didn't steal cars, there was a great sense of pride for the high school football team. There still is, but it's been taken out of context. Now, by order of the coach, the team spends every other day after school in the weight room, even though the season is over! Sports among youths have become a cult--and I don't think that it's right.

I can understand the practical reason for having them. People think that social situations help children get used to working cooperatively. That's not really true. Not soon after I moved here about eight and a half years ago my parents enrolled me in the local Boy Scout troop. Being new, it felt good to have some friends. However, I wasn't actually good at the kind of things they did. I'm not good at camping by the book, and I could care less about knots! And oh, how people change. Now, most of them hate me. I was made fun of and tormented. Now in high school, most of them are idiots, taking shop and having no futures. I unofficially quit. My mom had me re-entered without my knowledge; however it doesn't make any difference. Since I became a teenager I've tapped into my God-given right to rebel against my parents. They can't make me go. I vow that I will never go back.

Ok, this is going somewhere. They said I can only quit if I got involved in some other extracurricular activity. I'm working on it, but if nothing comes of it, I'm still quitting. My Dad was a scout, and constantly tried to make me into one. I love my parents, but they're delusional! It's just not for me. I don't want to become a recluse, but I will not associate with people who make fun of me.

If a sport is well enjoyed, or there is a visible love for music, or art, or *whatever*, then the passion

should be pursued by the child at his/her own pace. There is too much pressure from parents and coaches and THE REST OF THE WORLD. Part of a well-rounded education now also involves extracurricular activities. I have always considered myself very smart. But now I'm not so sure. Some of the people who were ranked higher than I in the first semester play three sports, lead two clubs, and probably have a boyfriend or girlfriend. It looks good on your permanent record. Colleges are very interested in activities outside of, or related to, school. I'm not involved in anything currently, and I hope I can find something. I want to feel like I'm doing some good. Hey, I can't sell myself on grades and good looks forever!

Note: To any parents of young children reading this, I'd like to say that your kids might not turn out as bluntly assertive and difficult as I...they might be worse!

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 13

Christopher and Mike were having an uneventful night. They took turns guarding their supplies, while the other slept soundly. It got boring after a while, and Mike regretted his decision to remain with Christopher. He thought of Mike, Chapin, and Katie, who were probably now exhausted from walking toward whatever they were looking for. Maybe they had found it, and maybe they hadn't. But whatever happened, Mike was sure it was more exciting than what he was doing.

It was a little after midnight now, and the forest was quiet. Too quiet. Then he realized - the chanting had stopped! Mike rushed to Christopher to wake him up. The first words out of his mouth were "What happened? Why has the chanting stopped? Are they back?"

"No, not yet," Mike replied. "But the chanting stopped and I thought that it might be a good idea to wake you up."

They were silent for a while, each having nothing more to say. The night dragged on, while the chanting was silent. Finally Christopher said, "Let's go and check what happened to them."

"Yeah," Mike replied. "Let's go." They picked up their heavy supply bags and moved them so that they rested under a bush to the side of the trail, unseen by eyes that might be watching.

Then they turned north, and followed the trail that Katie, Chapin, and Dave had gone down a few hours before. They had reached the clearing that the group had sat in to rest a few hours before, and noticed the fresh footprints.

"They've been here!" Christopher exclaimed.

"Hurry! Something bad might be happening!" Mike shouted, and not a second later started off toward the direction the footprints led. Christopher followed. They made good time for a few minutes, but as they continued, the trail became sloppier. Suddenly they stopped as the strange chanting began again.

"This is strange!" Mike said, a feeling of danger welling up inside him. He doubled on his efforts in running as fast as he could. Christopher ran faster than him, and was well ahead of him when the chanting began to get louder and clearer.

About two hundred yards from the location of the strange ruins (although Mike and Christopher did not know they were that close at the time), they stopped, panting, listening hopelessly as the chanting reached a deafening volume. They covered their ears as they approached the ruins.

Christopher came to the clearing with the front half of the building showing. He stopped in fright at the immense size of the fortress. Holes protruded from the sides, ready for an arrow to penetrate the darkness. Big wooden doors stood in front of them. The tower, now restored in its majesty, towered above them against the moonlight, creating a shadow that led to the doors in front of their feet.

"Oh my....," Christopher gasped. White, ghostly images hung out of the windows, as if slain in battle. At that moment, Mike caught up to him and saw the fort in front of him. The chanting became clearer at that precise moment so that they could hear the evil message behind it.

"Come, Yavin, Come!"

"What should we do?" Mike shouted over the noise, frightened. Christopher hesitated for a moment, afraid to make a decision either way.

"COME, YAVIN, COME!" The chanting grew above the threshold of pain, and Christopher and Mike covered their ears to block out the noise. The forest all around them seemed to grow darker by the minute.

"We have to go save them!" Christopher yelled at the top of his lungs, unable to make himself clear above the roaring voices. Mike was not able to hear him, but could make out his lips and nodded. Holding their ears to keep them from becoming deaf, they rushed toward the massive doors.

Suddenly, before them, the chanting ceased abruptly. There was silence. A bright light pierced the darkness. Christopher and Mike shrunk away from the light as a reddish-white figure appeared on the apex of the tower.

They watched in horror as it performed strange methodical motions, and the forest grew darker around them, and the silence seemed to increase, if that was even possible. Suddenly, as if he had been cut off by some unknown force, the figure suddenly disappeared in the middle of his motions.

A wail went up, in the same tone as the chanting. It slowly quieted down, and then ceased altogether. The white spirits vanished, and the forest became alive with evil sounds, like the squall of calks and the roars of trolls and animals that Yavin had possessed with his evil powers. The structure in front of them returned to its decayed state.

"Should we go in?" Mike asked, awaiting Christopher's answer, still obviously shaken by his experience a few minutes ago. Christopher replied, "We have to find the others!" and began to lead Mike to the strong doors. He noticed that there was a large hole in the rightmost door, large enough to get past the towering, strong entrance.

It was dark inside, but a bright red light shone brightly in the middle of the room. From the dim light, he could make out a figure to the back of the chamber - no, there were three!

"Chapin, Katie, Dave!" Christopher shouted. "Is that you?"

"Hurry!" Chapin responded. "I think Katie's hurt!"

Christopher ran as fast as he could, but due to the immense size of the ruins, he was not able to make it faster than two minutes, with Mike even farther behind. When he reached the group, he found them in shambles, the clothes on their backs reduced to rags and full of bruises. Katie still clutched the red stone as she lay on the ground, clutching her left leg with her other hand.

"Let's get her out of here," Christopher said.

"Yeah," Mike added. "What if that happens again? By the way, what happened to you?"

"It's a very long story," Dave said. "We'll tell it all later."

They ran as fast as they could to get out of the strange stone structure. There was no further excitement, and they passed through the doors safely. Christopher suggested that they walk farther away from the building before recanting their stories to each other.

They ended walking for about an hour, to the clearing that both parties had rested in on their way to the source of the chanting. They all noticed that it had stopped, but none of them said a word to each other.

The first word out of their mouths when they stopped was by Dave, who said loudly, "What in the world was that?"

"Wait," Christopher said when everybody began talking at once. "First let's find out what happened to each other." Mike retold what had happened to Christopher and him and of the agonizing wait for them. When he was finished, Christopher inquired, "Now what happened to you?"

Chapin began with their encounter with the strange statue, the dark building, and the events that had occurred before they had realized the voices' terrible message.

"What happened after that?" Christopher asked.

"Suddenly there was a loud bang," Chapin began. "and the chamber fell into pitch blackness. Then there was a white flash of light, and then everything was over a few minutes later. As soon as we were able to recover, you came in and found us."

"We saw a figure on the top of the building," Mike said. "It seemed to be chanting something, and making strange motions. I wonder if that could have been..." Mike stopped talking at the thought of the horrible word.

"I don't know," Dave replied. "But whoever it was, it was evil!"

"That's for sure!" Chapin agreed grimly.

Nobody was sure of what to say next, as it seemed that all to be said had been already. They decided to press on back to the junction between the roads, for their safety and so that they could get some rest in a peaceful location.

It was near dawn. The chanting hadn't been heard since after the incident with Yavin (or whoever it was who they had seen on top of the building). They reached the spot and settled down and were asleep in a few minutes, both scared and puzzled.

The day was uneventful, and because of their weird encounter the night before, the party slept soundly until sunset. It was dusk when Christopher awoke first, and proceeded to awaken the others. Everybody was refreshed, having had almost twelve hours' rest throughout the day.

It was decided that they would continue throughout that night because the chanting had stopped and so had all of the other weird nightly sounds. However, it seemed just a little darker that night than the night before and the nights before that when they had rested in the forest.

They came to a halt near the end of the night, as the area was beginning to get lighter with the beginnings of the new dawn in the east, the direction that they were going. They still couldn't see anything of the sky, which they had last seen only four days ago, but it seemed like years. This day was darker than the day before, and the darkness was even more apparent when they went to settle down for the day. It became so dark that it was getting hard for the party to see in the forest.

That night was even worse. It was almost pitch black, and even the light of the Hadar Stone was unable to penetrate even a few feet in front of them.

Eventually it became so dark that they had to stop and decided to rest for the morning. When they awoke, there was ample light to continue, however, it was still dark.

"Could the cessation of the chanting have something to do with this?" Chapin asked Christopher.

"It would be plausible," he said. "and likely. But why did the forest become darker? Maybe it's some evil caused by Yavin, or some related threat."

"What should we do?" Dave asked.

"Maybe we should stop," Katie said. "At least for a while, until we see what's going to happen."

"If we do that," Chapin responded, "we might not be here in a day or two to witness it. I suggest we get out of the forest as soon as possible."

"Agreed," Christopher said, ceasing the cry of Katie. He continued, "Let's pick up the pace in order to get out of here as fast as we can."

"How far do you think we have to go?" Dave asked Christopher after they began walking at a faster rate.

"I don't know...." he paused. It might be good if we had somebody climb the trees to see how far we have to go."

"That's a good idea," Mike agreed. "Who wants to volunteer?"

Nobody came out at first, but then Katie said, "Last time I almost got everybody killed in the tunnel, so it's only fair that I go."

"Everybody help get on this branch," said Christopher as he pointed toward the lowest branch of a tall tree that stood a few feet away to their south. Everybody grabbed Katie's ankles and hoisted her above the branch until she was able to grab on. It took what seemed like a long time for her to climb to the top of the tree. They lost sight of her halfway up because of the darkness coming from an unknown source. A minute later, they heard a cry.

"What is it?" Christopher yelled, his voice resonating deeply throughout the silent forest.

"I can't see anything from this point!" they heard a reply. "Let me take a minute to turn around.." There was a rustle in the trees above them, and then they heard, "There! It looks a long way off, but I think that it's the edge of the forest."

"How far?" Christopher hollered.

"I don't know," was the reply. "At the edge of the horizon. There seems to be a hill. It's bright over there."

"Can you see anything else?" Chapin asked Katie.

"Yeah," she replied. "It's bright up here, but there seems to be a sort of mist below that blocks the sunlight. You'd have to be up here to notice it."

"Come back down now," Christopher yelled. "We must be heading on so we can get far until

dark."

Katie scurried back down the tree, and a minute later they were back traveling down the road. Near midafternoon, the road dwindled to a beaten path that, from their observations, showed little signs of travel.

The same dreary scenery passed them in the murky afternoon. No sun reached them now, not even from openings in the treetops as they had seen when they had first entered the forest.

At the end of the day they were exhausted, both from their brisk pace and the darkness that seemed to seep the energy out of their pores. They went to bed in a grove of trees to the south of the path, which was now little more than a foot wide. Several times the day before Christopher had had to stop in order to clear a bush from the path, or direct the party around a tree that was in the way.

That night they heard no more chanting. The morning of the Eleventh of July dawned bright and early to the outside world, but inside the forest they could see no further than the distance from their eyes to their shoes. Walking just a few feet was beginning to become troublesome, as was evident that morning from the darkness (which had become no worse or better since the day before) and the path, which was deteriorating so rapidly that by noon it was almost nonexistent.

Around that time, Katie muttered, "Probably because many people have given up or ... died before they could cross the forest."

With that grim thought in mind, they continued on for the rest of the day, making progress, but not as much as the day before. Their plight continued for the next two days, with the path almost gone and the darkness affecting their weary bones.

The third day saw a major change to them. Mike was the first to notice it when he awoke before everyone else early in the morning.

"It feels warmer today," he muttered to himself. "And not as damp. Maybe we'll finally get out of this dreadful forest today."

"What's up?" Katie said as she rose from her sleep on the other side of the clearing. Dave awoke next, followed by Christopher. Mike repeated his phrase to the party so that everyone could hear. Then they set off toward the east. The path began to get wider again. Christopher said that that was a good sign, because if people came into the forest on the path, they couldn't be that far away from the edge. The murky darkness was getting to them all when, around midafternoon, they noticed a change - the path had returned to a normal road with markers around the edges.

The next night in the forest was their last. They were running low on food and water the next day when Katie cried out about an hour after they set off, before sunrise. Suddenly, the rising sun peeked through the end of the forest in the east, casting a yellowish glow about the path.

They ran as fast as they could toward the opening, about a mile distant, but visible by the bright sunlight. Fifteen minutes later at top speed, they were all exhausted, but they had just reached the opening.

The view was wonderful after being in the dark, dreary forest for over ten days. The sky was clear, and they could see for miles in wither direction. A tall hill stood in front of them.

"Let's climb that hill and we'll decide what to do next," Christopher said upon emerging from the forest. They set out to do just that. It only took them about two hours to climb the hill, short by what they had been accustomed to for the last two weeks. When they reached the top of the hill, everybody gasped.

Around them stood barren wasteland. The forest stretched out to their west as far as they could see. To the north, there was dirt where it was so dry during the summer that nothing grew. To the far south, there was a grassland, but it too seemed to be dying from lack of rain. And to their east, more of the same, except there seemed to be a town in the distance. It was vague, and must have been some distance away, but it was large.

"A town!" Mike remarked, in excitement of seeing someone else than themselves as they had not for the past month.

"Should we set out for that town?" Katie asked Chapin and Christopher.

"That might be a good idea," Dave agreed.

"If we did, we could catch up on the latest news of Yavin and see if they would want to mount a resistance," Chapin added.

Christopher agreed, so they sat down to eat lunch and after that went on toward the town. They didn't reach the town that day, or the next, but they liked traveling through the open air instead of the dreary, dark forest. The third day was hot, but dry, signaling that rain probably wouldn't come for the next few days. That day, they arrived at the grasslands, which were getting farther north away from the forest.

On the fourth day, they reached the town. It was large, as big as Harrogen, or bigger. Thick, long walls surrounded the city, and spikes protruded above the walls and gates. There were two lookout towers to either side of the main gate, and when they were in range of the guards' eyesight, they called out, "Who goes there?"

"Travelers!" Christopher yelled back. "We need food and supplies!"

"How do I know you're not spies for Yavin?" the guard responded.

"We're not!"

"Prove it!"

Christopher thought about this for a moment, and then Chapin picked up a stick and thrust it into the ground. An earthquake ensued, shaking the towers and striking fear into the guards.

"It's....it's....." the guards were speechless.

"The Elements have returned!" the screamed. Shouts rose up inside the city, and the gates began to open. People were crowding near the gates to get a glimpse of the two elementals.

"This is unexpected," Christopher said, almost nonchalantly. Dave, Mike, and Katie stared in wonder as the crowd parted and Chapin and Christopher led the way into the town. The doors closed slowly behind them. When they were about a hundred feet away from the gates, and elderly man approached them.

"Welcome to the village of Kahah. I am honored to meet the saviors of the world. I am the village elder, Scott."

"Nice to meet you," Christopher said, bowing. Then he said, "Can we have some food... and water? We have just traveled through the dark forest, and dreadful events have occurred."

"Oh, sure! We shall bring the finest!" Henry said. "Today is the 19th of July, isn't it? We'll have a huge celebration at nightfall to honor the day of birth of one of the saving elementals."

"I almost forgot!" Christopher said. "I was so worried about trying to survive that I forgot what day it was! Thank you for your kindness."

"One more thing, great elemental of ice," Scott continued. "I need to talk to you and your companions in private, preferably now, maybe while you eat. There is much to discuss." Christopher agreed and he allowed Scott to lead the way toward the chief's home, an ornate building constructed of glimmering stones. It was large, and stood in the middle against the northernmost wall of the city. When they got inside, Scott closed the door, instructed his servants to bring some food, and then told tem to leave. When all was silent, Scott began, "I think it would be a good time to discuss what to do about Yavin."

Everybody was silent and attentive. "This town has been through hard times. It's been years since we were able to travel outside the walls safely, and trolls are always causing trouble. We now have to grow our crops inside. And the growing season is so short this far north that there might be famine this winter. We need to act now to prevent Yavin from gaining too much power."

"What do you propose we do?" Chapin asked.

"We need to figure out a way to revive the other elemental. Even if we couldn't do that, we could still provide a small army for your assistance."

"The elemental can't be revived now," Christopher said, going on to tell him the adventures that they had been through so far. It was two hours later when they had finished.

"How small are you talking about?" Christopher asked.

"Maybe.... a few hundred men."

"That's substantial. But they could not do anything about Yavin," Mike said.

"He's right, even with his youth," Scott responded. "We can't just send a horde of soldiers toward his castle. We don't know how many trolls and weird creatures there are in there. It could be a suicide mission."

"Yes," Christopher agreed, "but maybe not. We do have two of the elementals on our side."

"Two," Henry said. "But not all three. You can't use many of your powers without the third, am I correct?"

"Yes," Chapin responded. "So we must go and find the third."

"That won't be easy," Christopher said. "The shrine was destroyed."

"Maybe," Chapin said. "But I just thought of another way."

"You mean-" Christopher stopped.

"Yes," Chapin continued. "The towers of Guldah."

"What are those?" Mike asked.

"Towers," Scott butted in. "There is a legend that they have powers that will be unleashed for the force of defeating Yavin when there is greatest need."

"But they're up north, near Yavin's fortress," Christopher said.

"I know," Scott said. "That's why I'll have my soldiers escort you there and keep you safe. It's the only hope for the world, and this town."

Christopher, Chapin, and the rest of the party talked over the decision among themselves for a moment, and then turned to Scott and said, "OK, we'll go."

"Great," Scott said. "Take a rest here for a few days while I prepare our army, and then we'll leave together.

That was the end of the discussion, and it was late afternoon when they finally left the house. That night, a party was held in honor of Christopher's birthday, and they stayed in the town five more days. On the morning of the fifth, it was announced that they would be leaving the next day at dawn.

The sixth day dawned bright, and early even though the days were getting shorter, it was still about 5:00 when the sun rose because they were so far north. The party awoke in the middle of the night with the rest of the town to gather their supplies.

There was a big commotion in the square when the first rays of light broke out over the east. A trumpet was sounded, and everybody grew quiet.

"We go forth in the name of the elementals!" Scott shouted from a horse near the front of the crowd. He was adorned in robes that held the symbols of the town. There was a loud cheer.

With a signal from his hand, the leader of the knights, a middle-aged, tall man wearing different colors in the front lead them out of the square.

Eventually the square emptied with the knights leading the way. Christopher and Chapin rode on a horse near the front of the pack, and Dave and Mike and Katie followed close behind, each on a separate horse that rode near the front of the pack. After the town had cleared, the enormous gates were closed.

They set off toward the northeast. The first day, since they were traveling over the barren plains, they made good time and were able to travel a great distance.

However, after that, the ground became rugged with the approach of the mountains that surrounded the towers and Yavin's fortress. The second day was one of the hottest they had seen since they were further south back in June when Katie, Mike, and Dave had arrived in this strange world. Due to the extreme heat, them and the five hundred or so knights stopped for a rest around noon. Each person present took something to eat of their backpack and sat down on the ground to eat it. They had been prepared with fifteen full days of food each, with about twice that if it came to rationing. They expected to be at the castle in ten days of so, and would cross a small pine forest where there was sure to be at least a little food. "So," Christopher said to the lead knight during the break. "Have you ever gone against Yavin before?"

"No, this will be the first," he replied. "Everybody was too afraid to go against him earlier."

"What is your party going to do once we get to the towers and revive the fire elemental?"

“I don’t know,” was the reply. “We were told to do by Scott whatever the circumstances came to.”

Katie, Mike, and Dave approached from an area to the left of where they were. “What are you guys talking about?” Dave said as he walked toward them.

“Nothing,” Chapin responded. “Scott and his soldiers might stay with us all the way to Yavin.”

“We can get home faster that way,” Mike said.

“Don’t count on it,” Christopher said. “Yavin always has another trick ready to pull on us.”

Katie put her hands in her pockets, not knowing that the Hadar Stone was still in there. As a result, there was a bright flash, and she disappeared.

“What was that?” the leader said.

Christopher explained to all of the knights about the Hadar Stone and the sword which Dave held at his side. After that was over, they continued on toward the east, unbeknownst of what was to happen to them in just a few days.

Terror in the Wall

by Steven Conway

It was a bright summer day in June. Larry and Dwight were bored. They had just gotten out of school and it was their last day before Dwight went to overnight summer camp. "What do you want to do today?" asked Dwight. "As you know, this is my last day here before I go to summer camp."

"Do you want to go to the mall?" questioned Larry."

"Yes, I need to get something for my girlfriend, Jennifer." replied Dwight.

Larry and Dwight made the short walk from Forest Avenue where Larry lived to the Willow Grove Mall. They decided to go to the Wall to get the latest Smashing Pumpkins cassette tape. After that, they went to the WHYY Store of Knowledge so Dwight could get three puzzle books for the free time he had before he had to go sleep. The third stop on this faithful journey was to the food court so they could get some lunch at Wendy's. After a delicious lunch, Dwight and Larry went to Challenges arcade to play some Mortal Kombat V. Dwight won two out of three on that game. They also played NHL Open Ice. Dwight was the New York Rangers and Larry was the Philadelphia Flyers. Larry creamed him in that game seven to nothing. Finally, Dwight realized he needed to get something for his girlfriend, Jennifer. They decided that the perfect gift would be found in the Wall on the second floor. Jennifer loves the new hit rock group "Beefy Beef." She has a secret crush on the lead vocalist, Jimmy Jumper. They were looking all over the store and were coming up empty handed.

"Excuse me sir, but do you have the latest cassette tape from "Beefy Beef" called "Pork?" asked Dwight.

"I'm sorry son, but we just sold our last copy." said the salesman. "Perhaps there may be a copy in our third floor store. Even though this store is smaller, we get much more business in this store."

Larry and Dwight went up the escalator to the third floor to the Wall. When they were there, they found the CD they were looking for. While they were there, they saw their best friend, Sokolowski.

Sokolowski has never gotten in trouble in his life.

"What are you doing here?" asked Sokolowski.

"What do you think I'm doing here? Growing wool?" questioned Larry sarcastically.

While they were looking for another CD, Larry and Dwight found Jennifer unexpectedly.

"Jennifer, I was going to come by your house later today." said Dwight

"Well, you just saved yourself a trip." replied Jennifer. She muttered under her breath, "Thank God."

All of a sudden out of nowhere, two gunshots fired and everybody screamed. Unfortunately, Jennifer was lying on the ground. She was not breathing.

"Don't worry everybody," said the salesman. "I'll call security and medical personnel."

"Come on Jennifer, wake up!" screamed Dwight.

"Hello security, this is Jones up here in the Wall third floor. There has just been a shooting here in our store. I got a brief glimpse of the shooter. He was 5 feet three inches tall, about 130 pounds, red shirt, blue jeans, and white sneakers. He made a left out of the store heading down to the food court. We also need medical personnel on the scene immediately.

"Come on, Jennifer! You got to wake up!" screamed Dwight.

TO BE CONTINUED...

One Moment

by Sean Malseed

Rob sat down at his desk, rather uneagerly waiting for another boring, routine day at school. He was not there the earliest; only the nerdy kids came in early. He wasn't there the last, either. He was a normal kid. That was certain. This was going to be another normal day. That was also certain, although the unexpected still sometimes happens. He looked at the day's weather map, which was taken from the newspaper, enlarged, and hung next to the chalkboard. It was 65 degrees out and sunny in Glendale, California. Then he scanned over to the chalkboard, noticing first the date, October 4th, 1999, and then the homework assignment written right under it. Suddenly, he remembered that he hadn't done it. It was a big assignment, and missing it was definitely going to take a big chunk out of his grade. He rationalized that one project wasn't going to make him flunk fifth grade, seeing as he was already an A student. The rest of the kids were coming into the classroom now, and so did his best friend, Joel, who had a different teacher.

"Hiya, Robbie!" Joel shouted from halfway across the room. Joel wasn't very tall, and he had jet black hair. He was stronger than he looked, and it had become his trademark to wear a black shirt.

"Hi," Rob finally responded. "Do you have to shout from the other side of the room?"

Joel changed his face to a look of surprise. "Yes! Of course!" Rob gave Joel a mock grin, in response to his sometimes annoyingly stupid sense of humor.

"Howsabout you just go on back to your class before your teacher marks you absent, and try not to think too hard."

Joel manipulated his face again and put his finger in his ear. "Duh...okeydokey." Rob rolled his eyes, and then turned back around. The teacher was now standing up in front of the class, watching Joel leave. They still had a full five minutes until the buzzer sounded over the PA system, signaling the start of the day. Rob looked over to the speaker that was on the wall, waiting impatiently for that familiar

annoying sound. As he looked over in that direction, something caught his eye. It was Jamie Kesler, quite possibly the prettiest ten year old ever to grace the halls of Glendale Elementary School. He wanted to meet her more than anything, and he didn't know what he would do if he didn't. He was much too shy to say something, however. He quickly turned around when she noticed him staring at her. If only he could get himself to go over there and talk to her, to tell her how he felt. If he only knew if she liked him. Or at least didn't hate him. He didn't even know much about her, only what he saw. He saw that she was very organized- not super-organized, but much more organized than Rob. Also, while Rob had to struggle to keep up his A/B average, everything just seemed to come naturally to her. Whenever the teacher asked a question, it was usually Jamie who answered. Rob knew that she had a bright future. A very bright one indeed, and he wished that he could have a part in it.

"Never happen." The thought shook him out of his deep thought. The buzzer finally sounded, and the teacher instantly snapped into teaching mode. She started the morning announcements, reading from the master list that is issued to the office faculty. No one quite understood why she read the announcements, because the assistant principal came on the PA system every morning with them as well; usually Ms. Winters wouldn't even get halfway through them, but still she persisted. After the rather short list of announcements were read over the PA system, Ms. Winters stood everyone up for the pledge of allegiance. Most of the kids, including Rob, just mouthed it. Only about four really said it. They had all figured out that, by the time they were old enough to understand what the words that had been drilled into them meant, there was no point in doing it; pledging allegiance to a rectangle of colored cloth was stupid. In the future the world would have to be united, or we will destroy ourselves.

Afterwards, it was time for the one-hour science lesson. Science. Rob remembered the project.

"All right, children, I will be collecting your science projects at the end of the period." Ms. Winters was the perfect reason why the older generation was stereotyped the way it was. Gray hair, wrinkly face, impatient, cold, strict, and with a thin scratchy voice to top it all off. Rob wished for something, anything that would give him a reason not to turn in the project.

It was a half hour through the class, and it had been one half hour straight of Ms. Winters droning on about rocks.

"So, does anyone have any questions about the formation of sedimentary..." She was interrupted halfway through the sentence by a rumble coming from outside. It had started out quiet and unnoticed by the masses. All of the sudden, it became louder, and continued to become louder at a shockingly fast rate.

"John," the teacher called to one student sitting near the windows, "could you please go see what that is?" John walked over to the window, and thrust his head under the shade toward the increasingly loud noise. He quickly pulled his head from behind the manila-colored rectangle and stumbled vacantly back to his seat.

"What is it?" came the teacher, but no response followed from the ghost white student. His mouth moved slightly up and down, but no sound came out. Ms. Winters walked with a quickened pace over to the window, tugged on the bottom of the shade, and let if fly upwards, flapping a few times and coming to a rest. Silence filled the room, and all eyes were on the huge oblong object gradually filling the western part of the sky. It glowed a reddish color and was bright yellow around the edges. It seemed incredibly close to the ground and only a couple hundred of miles away from the school. The teacher turned slowly toward the class, a million possibilities racing through her head. What if it disintegrated in the atmosphere? No, too big and too close. What if it hit the ocean? No, tidal waves worldwide. Then what was there? What options? She turned to the class, and said faintly: "Remain seated. Don't worry."

She waited for an announcement to come over the intercom. The waiting made the situation even more tense. The entire class sat plastered to their seats, as the rumbling turned into a deafening roar. For a few seconds the roar seemed almost bearable, and then it hit. It hit somewhere near La Jolla City, and it hit with incredible force. The sound of impact itself must've shattered windows across the country. A huge wave of energy flew through the ground and hit the school a few seconds later. It threw everyone out of their seats, and plaster showered them, filling the air with thick white dust. Screams penetrated the sounds of devastation, and suddenly the thought of Jamie flew into Rob's head, brought forth by some

primordial instinct. He looked over at her, sitting up on the floor, and through the dust he thought he saw her crying. He began to make his way toward her, and she looked up at him, fear prying her eyes wide open. She seemed to take salvage in the intent eyes of Rob. He was only a few feet away when a huge crack came from up above them, and a huge support beam fell from the ceiling. Robs eyes locked with those of Jamie's, just before the huge piece of metal struck her, evicting a short, horrid scream that would haunt Rob for the rest of his life. There was an eerie sensation in Jamie's lifeless eyes, still staring up at Rob from a mangled and irregularly twisted body. A small trickle of blood began to line down Jamie's left cheek, which lay flat on the floor, and that is when the full impact of her death finally struck Rob. His eyes shut, his teeth clenched, his fists locked firmly into whitening spheres, and he turned away from Jamie's lifeless heap of a body. For a few seconds Rob thought of nothing but the former Jamie. She was gone, killed, in a short instant. Everything that she was, everything that she would have been, the bright eternal flame that was Jamie Kesler, was snuffed out in an instant by the unfair justice from above. His mind thought up twisted ways that he, too, could join her, to end what little he had and join her wherever she had gone. He was quickly snapped out of his state of dementia when he heard what must have been the lower section of the school collapsing. His mind flew to Joel, because that is where his class had been, in another world, a better world, a world Rob had forgotten in this place of devastation. Rob sprang up from the place where he had been kneeling and flung himself in the direction of the door. He clumsily cleared the fallen beam, the students beneath it, and Jamie, and stumbled out of the door. He collided with Joel, and both boys fell backwards, surprised at each other's presence. They stared with both fear and relief at one another for a second, and then Rob spoke out in a barely audible voice.

"Joe.. Joel? How did you make it out ?"

"I ran when the earthquake had started." There was no joking in Joel's voice now. "I was the first one out. I... I... I think they're all... dead... back there."

"It wasn't an earthquake," Rob's voice shook when he spoke. "It was a meteor." Joel's face cringed into an ugly face of madness.

"How can you joke around in the middle of all this death!"

"I'm not joking!" Rob was shouting now. "It really was! I saw it out the window!"

"My god," Joel said in a much recovered face. "If it were, there will probably be another shock-wave. We were learning about tectonics today, about earthquakes and stuff, and... and..."

Joel pointed back into the rubble. "And... we have to get out of here!"

They both took off toward the main entrance, and away from the devastation behind. They ran through the empty halls, choking on the dust and blocking the screams from their heads. They leaped over the dead and dying who were trying to escape at one time, but failed. They turned a corner, and were face to face with where the main doors were supposed to be. Instead, a wall of flame towered dominatingly from a ruptured gas line in the floor. Scattered about were several small burnt carcasses, unrecognizable unnamed heaps of charred blackness only vaguely reminiscent of the kindergartners they once were. Lying near them was the dead but more intact body of their teacher, an unharmed white flower seated nicely in her vest pocket. Her eyes stared wide and lifeless at her students, forever watching over them. Rob and Joel turned from the scene of pure death and ran, with no destination in mind other than away from the carnage about them. By some feat of luck they saw a door near the end of a hallway, littered with the bodies of the dead and the stench of decay. The bolted past all of it, unaware of anything, in a mad frenzy for the door. As Rob ran, he stepped on a hand protruding from a pile of wood and ceiling tiles. It moved in reaction to the pain, and a voice restarted its vain attempts at calling for rescue. Rob heard the voice and recognized it as that of his friend, Adam Rolder. He ignored it and ran through the shattered glass doors.

Outside, there were other people, all in varied states of health, and all restrained from moving any farther by a huge fault line in the earth which had split open, leaving everyone trapped on a fifteen-foot-wide ledge. Rob turned back to the building, and the screaming, and forgot about everything. Joel, Jamie, Adam, his parents, everything was pushed aside by his want to survive. He was about to start back into the building in an attempt to reach the other side, when the whole section collapsed in a huge sound,

one of striking finality. Several huge jets of flame burst up from the ruins, blocking out the moans of those unlucky enough to be still alive underneath. Rob turned to Joel, and Joel looked back at them. A sense of helplessness was about them, the frenzy for survival lost. They stood, facing each other for a few seconds, and then the final shockwave struck. Everyone who was standing was thrown to the ground, a few even down into the gorge. The ledge began to slant into the rift in the earth and then crumble. Rob screamed, and so did Joel, and the huge mouth inhaled the school, and the two hundred screaming surviving children and adults within. The building was lost in the abyss below, and with it the lives of so many of the world's previous future.

* * *

The rumbling had stopped, and survivors crawled out of the remains of the structures of a lost civilization which had protected them from the fury from above, and stared into the sky. It was completely overcast with dust, dust that would block out the sun for a millennium, and most certainly thrust the Earth into its next ice-age. Everything that was, everything that everyone had worked so hard for, and everything that was once thought to be so important, was gone. Wiped away. All in a moment. One moment.

The Storm

by Steven Conway

It was a beautiful, warm Saturday afternoon in July in Willow Grove. My mom was on vacation from work and we were going to go miniature golfing that afternoon. The weatherman on Channel Ten the night before said it would be warm and sunny with a high of seventy-two degrees.

"Let's have breakfast and then get the newspaper," my mom said.

"Can I have an egg, cheese, and bacon biscuit?" I asked.

"Sure," my mom said.

My mom and I sat down to breakfast watching Regis and Kathie Lee and talking about which course to go to that day. All of a sudden, there was an Accu-Weather alert.

"This is Dave Roberts and there is an unexpected severe thunderstorm coming our way and it will affect EVERYBODY in the Delaware Valley. There will be severe rain, thunder, lightning, and hail. Start taping those windows because it's going to be a violent storm. This is Dave Roberts and we will now send you back to Regis and Kathie Lee."

"There goes our miniature golf outing today," I said.

"Let's forget about getting the newspaper and start preparing for the storm," my mom said.

The first thing we did was get masking tape and tape the outside of all the windows possible. All of a sudden, the rain started to come down.

"Hurry up, Mom. The rain is starting to hammer us with a little bit of hail mixed in," I said worried.

"I'm going as fast as I can," my mom said.

"Forget about the windows and let's get inside as fast as possible," I said.

My mom agreed and as fast as possible we ran inside the house. The trees were blowing and the wind must have been gusting fifty to sixty miles per hour. About five minutes after we were in the house,

the power went out.

"I had a feeling that was going to happen, I just didn't know when," I said with a half-smile.

"Don't open the fridge, use only the food in the cabinets," my mom answered.

The storm had been pounding everything possible for about one hour and it wasn't letting up.

"Do you have any flashlights?" I asked. "Because if you do we can do puzzles."

"I do, Steven. Give me a second," my mom responded.

We sat and did puzzles for about ninety minutes while the storm and the wind howled.

"Even though I have gone through severe snowstorms and thunderstorms, this must be the worst storm I have ever been through," I said worried.

"I have to agree with you," said my mom. "I never want to go through anything like this ever again."

We were on about our thirteenth crossword puzzle, but it seemed like our thirtieth. About one hour after we completed that puzzle, the storm abruptly stopped, and the sun was shining over Willow Grove once again. A little while after that, the power was restored.

"I am so delighted that the storm is over!" I exclaimed.

"Me, too," my mom said. "I never want to go through that ever again."

Three days later, Willow Grove was evaluated for damage. The appraisal of damage was close to $500,000! By September, Willow Grove was up and running once again.