Shoemaker Village

Volume 20 - July 1998

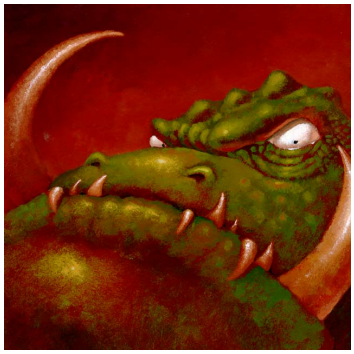
TWO MAJOR NEWS STORIES THIS MONTH!



SEVERE STORM HITS AREA - **14 PAGES OF COVERAGE!**



RORVIKS' GOAT TERRORIZES NEIGHBORHOOD!



The Knights of the Square Table continues!

Comedy Central changes to *Humor from the Village Square*!

Christopher Sokolowski apologizes- and revives the Short Stories section!



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Editor's Pages

Information you should know



Christopher Sokolowski

Well, summer is in full swing now, and the *Village* has all you need for something to do on those lazy, hot summer days.

To start off with good news, Christopher Sokolowski, who deleted the *Village* files on January 2, apologized recently and was rehired to be a writer for the *Village*. Christopher reports that he is "glad that this conflict for the past seven months is finally over," and that he is looking forward to writing short stories for the *Village*.

There are two special reports included in the *Village* this month: one regarding the Rorviks' goat and the other which involves the severe storms that hit the area. (See below.) As you may remember, the last special report that was featured was published in September 1997, on the subject of the Hoffmans' dog, Klaus, being poisoned.

And now on to our big news this month: We have expanded coverage on the severe storms that ravaged the area on the evening of May 31. You will find a one-page special report on the storms after the neighborhood news section of this month's *Village*. Also, Matthew Care has produced a **9-page** documentary on the storm as he experienced it.

Along with Matthew's excellent work, you will also find some exclusive photos that were taken by *Village* staff shortly after the storm. These photos can be found on page 14, and are referred to in Matthew's story.

Unfortunately, Matthew was unable to continue *The Tomb of the Unknown World*, which has been struggling to survive in the past few issues. (This is because of his feature article on the storm.) Matthew hopes that he will be able to continue *The Tomb of the Unknown World* in August.

In other news, Sean Malseed, who published an untitled story last month, has refused to continue writing for the *Village*. The reason for this is unknown; but we sincerely hope that, in the future, Sean continues to write for us.

The *Shoemaker Village* webpages also have been getting less traffic than usual. This month, there were only four recorded visitors! We have remodeled our webpages so that you can enjoy our online world; but without people showing interest, we may have to discontinue them. If you would like to visit the new webpages, go to **http://members.aol.com/shoevill**.

On the next page, you will find a letter from our assistant editor, Matthew Care, who has written *The Storm* for this issue. Please take the time to read his comments, because it will allow you to understand his story more fully.

We have been informed recently that the name of our comedy section, Comedy Central, has already been used by a long-standing late-night program on MTV. Therefore, we have changed the name to Humor from the Village Square.

You may have noticed that the *Village* was late this month. This was due to the enormous workload of homework that our editors received over the second-to-last (June 8-12) week of school. Both of the editors report that they did NOTHING other than homework every night that

week. In response to this, the *Village* was late. As you can see, *The Knights of the Square Table* is a bit short as a direct result of this.

This month, we have, at the request of many of our readers, decided to expand the neighborhood news section to area news, which encompasses all of the areas in which our subscribers live. We hope that this will satisfy some of our subscribers who live outside the neighborhood.

It is unfortunate that there were only four surveys received by us in the past month. With the declining interest level of the *Village*, and the shortage of contributions, we may deem it necessary, in the future, to cancel the *Village*. We hope that this does not happen. If you would like to submit comments or articles, please E-Mail us or send them to the address on the Acknowledgments page.

One final note: enlarged copies of the *Village* are available at no extra charge beginning with this issue for our visually impaired subscribers. Send a letter to the *Village* (via the address on the Acknowledgments page) for a copy.

Thank you for your continuing support of the *Village*. We always need stories and articles, so feel free to send them in. Enjoy this issue of *Shoemaker Village*! Read below for a note from our assistant editor, Matthew Care.



A Note from the Assistant Editor

Matthew Care

I would like to inform the readers that I, Matthew Care, was once again not able to complete a suitable amount of my story, *The Tomb of the Unknown World*, to be published. In all honesty, the story has had trouble from the very beginning. The reason for my slacking off was that I have been focusing all my time on completing this month's special insert, *The Storm*, the true story of the tornado that hit my area several days after the last publication of the *Village*. It is questionable whether I'll even continue *The Tomb of the Unknown World*. After much consideration, I have thought it may just be a waste of time. While I have received no complaints, I have received no positive feedback either. Unless I am personally contacted (or receive comments through E-Mail or the address on the Acknowledgments page) with a request to continue my adventure story, I may be forced to discontinue it.

Thank you for supporting the *Village* and be sure you read *The Storm*.

Acknowledgments

***Shoemaker Village* STAFF**

Editor Stephen Sokolowski

Assistant Editor Matthew Care

Proofreader Jean Sokolowski

Storywriters Matthew Care, Steven Conway, Christopher Sokolowski, Henry Sokolowski

This month's story contributors

Stephen Sokolowski, Matthew Care, Steven Conway, Christopher Sokolowski

New subscribers this month

Ms. Monica Leone

Departing subscribers this month

Michael Angely, Patrick Haggerty, The Reiser Family, The Lagreca Family

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The next issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Friday, July 31, 1998.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Tuesday, July 28, 1998.

Next month's topic in The Discussion Forum will be *Physical Education in Our Schools.*

Coming Next Issue

Volume 21- August 1998

Find out all that happened over July in neighborhood news!
The Untitled Story continues - there's no way you want to miss it next time!
The action in *The Tomb of the Unknown World* is starting to build up! Be sure you don't miss next month!!
The Knights of the Square Table continues!
More great stories, news, comedy, and more!

ALL IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *SHOEMAKER VILLAGE*!

Puzzle Page

F	I	T	Z	W	A	T	E	R	T	O	W	N	M	A
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Words

Allison
Balloons
Barbeque
Blue
Day
Dry Ice
Ellis
Fireworks
Fitzwatertown
Flag
Food
Fourth
Freedom
Grove
Hamburger
Hot
Hotdog
Independence
July
Matt Care
May
Mobil
Parade
Park
Party
Philadelphia
Picnic
Pool
Power line
Red
Stars
Storm
Stripes
Tornado
Tree
White
Willow

Neighborhood News

July 1998

PIONEER ROAD RECONSTRUCTION CONTINUES

The construction project has continued this month, after numerous delays.

The construction stopped for a while during April and early May due to unknown reasons. However, since June 3, it has resumed.

The project was halted yet again on the first and second days of June due to the tornado that touched down in Willow Grove, causing widespread damage. After that, the construction workers resumed reinstalling gas pipes.

After the pipe work was completed, there was no further construction on Pioneer Road. Although nobody knows the cause of these delays, it is suspected that they are normal and are no cause for concern.

Also, near the middle of June, it was noticed that several telephone poles that held up electrical wires had been duplicated, the alternate poles standing a few feet behind the existing ones. It is guessed that these poles will hold the wires after they are moved to allow for the expansion of the road.

Also, a flyer recently appeared in neighborhood mailboxes, stating that Pioneer Road was to be closed from June 29 through July 2 from the railroad bridge to Byberry Road. It is unknown at publishing time what is the reason.



This flyer appeared in neighborhood mailboxes recently.

Although the construction project was originally scheduled to be completed by the end of spring, it is now unknown at what time it will be finished. However, traffic in the area is expected to be slow until then.

UNUSUAL WEATHER TAKES A DRAMATIC TURN

Unusual weather has been plaguing the area for the past year, but this month, the weather was at its worst.

Two major storms battered the area during June, the first producing a tornado that destroyed half of Willow Grove. The second storm damaged trees and cars in Port Richmond. For more coverage on the storms, see the special report in this issue.

After a severe hot streak in late May, the weather was very cool in early June. Several people, who had already dewinterized their pools in May, found themselves unable to use them because of the cold weather.

"I'm glad I didn't open my pool early this year," said neighbor Henry Sokolowski. "I waited until the third week of June!"

When the cold weather subsided, the heat returned. On June 26, a thermometer in the neighborhood read 107 degrees in the sunlight. However, the hottest day this year in the immediate neighborhood remains at March 28, when the temperature reached 108.



The weather has caused unusual effects, such as the health of the grass shown in this picture.

"I'm tired of all this weird weather," complained Jean Sokolowski, as she applied Miracle-Gro to rejuvenate her tomato

plants because of the lack of sun. "I hope that it returns to normal soon."

EARLINESS REACHES ITS PEAK

"Just take it one day at a time." This is Jean Sokolowski, our proofreader's, favorite saying. However, from the looks of things around the area, not many people are taking it seriously.

The days may be getting shorter, and the earth spiraling toward winter, and K-Mart corporation believes just that. When visited, (June 26), neighbor Christopher Sokolowski noticed boxes of Back-to-School supplies being unpacked in the pool toys section.

"This is stupid," editor Steve Sokolowski said. "Who is going to buy school supplies in June? School just got out seven days ago!"

Also that day, Henry Sokolowski, Jean's husband, received a circular in the mail advertising winterizing kits for his pool.

Lost and Found

SPECIAL REPORT

RORVIKS' ANIMALS OUT OF CONTROL

On Saturday, May 30, 1998, the Rorviks' goat made its return to the neighborhood, prompting angry calls from the neighbors.



The Rorviks' goat was spotted walking across the lawn on May 31, 1998.

The goat was first discovered at around 11:00 AM on that morning, while Henry Sokolowski, a neighbor living at the corner property, was installing a ceiling fan on his porch. His son, Stephen Sokolowski, spotted the goat lumbering across the yard on a direct course toward them.

After Henry spotted the goat, he yelled to his wife, Jean, to ask her to come and remove the goat from the porch. However, Jean was also unsuccessful in her attempts at goat removal.

"Then the goat started ----ing on my porch," said Henry during an interview. "It was everywhere! I ran inside. Who knows what kinds of diseases that goat had?"

A prompt call to the Rorviks was made; but this was also unsuccessful, as the Rorviks could not be reached. Soon after, Jean tried a second time to reach them.

Finally, while standing in the middle of the yard while her son Christopher fought off the goat as it tried to lick his hands, Jean called the police. The officer who answered the phone reportedly asked Jean, "Do you live near the Marketplace?"

"They said that they would leave a message on the Rorviks' answering machine! They didn't offer any help! I guess it's happened so many times before that they didn't care!"

Shortly after, the goat made its way to the Altimaris' driveway, while neighbor Pat Altimari was standing outside, planting her flowers. As the Sokolowski family watched in terror, Pat jumped into her car to protect herself from the goat.

Bob Altimari, her husband, took a flagpole and chased the goat out of their front yard, across the Sokolowskis' property, and back into the Rorviks' yard.

"It was hilarious!" Jean Sokolowski commented as she watched the event. "You should have taken a picture for the *Village*!" Unfortunately, the *Village* camera ran out of film at that moment, depleted from the numerous pictures of the goat taken a few moments before, as shown on the following and preceding pages.

"This is serious," Henry Sokolowski commented, taking a different angle. "If that goat comes around here again, I'm not sittin' around while it defecates all over my porch. If

the Rorviks' goat breaks any windows, they are going to pay!"

"I was frightened," Christopher Sokolowski said as he witnessed the event from outdoors. "We all ran into the yard when the goat started relieving himself on the porch."



Another picture of the goat, this time outside the Sokolowskis' porch door.

Christopher is also referring to how the goat, halfway though the attack, stood *upright* and used its front legs to make a permanent dent in his family's porch screen door.

Many other neighbors are now outraged about the Rorviks' animals. This is not the first time the goat has been loose, either. The goat appeared two other times, one last summer when a similar incident occurred in the Sokolowskis' yard, and again last August when the goat was spotted on the Slouskys' front lawn, with its fellow chickens.

One can't help but notice that, in all these events of the past month, the Rorviks' chickens, which terrorized the neighborhood last year, have disappeared. Alfred Muzyka, Jean Sokolowski's father, provides a possible explanation to this: "Well, they've got nests to guard, and eggs to lay, and they're preoccupied at home. They're older, not as inquisitive about the world outside their farm."

Another incident worth noting - the Rorviks' dog, Max, appeared on the Sokolowskis' lawn earlier that month. Although there were no injuries, and the dog abruptly left when Jean yelled "GO HOME!", it still adds to the tension that exists around the neighborhood.

Hopefully, the Rorviks' animals will be controlled in the future. As Henry says, "I can't stand this any longer!"

Going to the Dogz

DOG TIDBITS

-The Altimari Family recently took care of two dogs instead of their usual one. "They looked identical," said neighbor Jean Sokolowski. "I couldn't tell who was who when each was alone!"

-Max, the Rorviks' dog, was spotted around the neighborhood several times during the months of May and June. However, neighbor Jean Sokolowski silenced this threat many times by yelling "GO HOME!"

Humor from the Village Square

MORE EXAM QUESTIONS

Last month, we published some questions from a final exam. Due to the great response we had from our readers, we have decided to include an encore. Enjoy.

Computer Science: Write a fifth-generation computer language. Using this language, write a computer program to finish the rest of this exam for you.

Electrical Engineering: You will be placed in a nuclear reactor and given a partial copy of the electrical layout. The electrical system has been tampered with. You have seventeen minutes to find the problem and correct it before the reactor melts down.

Civil Engineering: This is a practical test of your design and building skills. With the boxes of toothpicks and glue present, build a platform that will support your weight when you and your platform are suspended over a vat of nitric acid.

Psychology: Based on your knowledge of their early works, evaluate the emotional stability, degree of adjustment, and repressed frustrations of each of the following: Alexander of

Aphrodisia, Ramses II, and Gregory of Nicea. Support your evaluation with quotations from each man's work, making appropriate references. It is not necessary to translate.

Chemistry: You must identify a poison sample which you will find at your lab table. All necessary equipment has been provided. There are
two beakers at your desk, one of which holds the antidote. If the wrong substance is used, it causes instant death. You may begin as soon as the professor injects you with a sample of the poison.
Mechanical Engineering: The disassembled parts of a howitzer have been placed in a box on your desk. You will also find an instruction manual, printed in machine language. In ten minutes a hungry Bengal tiger will be admitted to the room. Take whatever action you feel appropriate. Be prepared to justify your actions.

Economics: Describe in four hundred words or less what you would have done to prevent the Great Depression.

Mathematics: Derive the Euler-Cauchy equations using only a straightedge and compass. Discuss in detail the role these equations had on mathematical analysis in Europe during the 1800s.

Religion: Perform a miracle. Creativity will be judged.

Art: Given one eight-count box of crayons and three sheets of notebook paper, recreate the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Skin tones should be true to life.

Metaphysics: Describe in detail the probable nature of life after death. Test your hypothesis.

Extra Credit: Define the universe and give three examples.

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TECH SUPPORT ENGINEER

"Hello. Tech Support; may I help you?"

"Yes, well, I'm having trouble with WordPerfect."

"What sort of trouble?"

"Well, I was just typing along, and all of a sudden the words went away."

"Went away?"

"They disappeared."

"Hmm. So what does your screen look like now?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"It's blank; it won't accept anything when I type."

"Are you still in WordPerfect or did you get out?"

"How do I tell?"

[Uh-oh. Well, let's give it a try anyway.] "Can you see the C:\ prompt on the screen?"

"What's a sea-prompt?"

[Uh-huh, thought so. Let's try a different tact.] "Never mind. Can you move the cursor around on the screen?"

"There isn't any cursor. I told you, it won't accept
anything I type."

[Ah--at least s/he knows what a cursor is. Sounds like a hardware problem. I wonder if s/he's kicked out his/her monitor's power plug.] "Does your monitor have a power indicator?"

"What's a monitor?"

"It's the thing with the screen on it that looks like

a TV. Does it have a little light that tells you when it's on?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then look on the back of the monitor and find where the power cord goes into it. Can you see that?"

[sound of rustling and jostling] [muffled] "Yes, I think so."

"Great! Follow the cord to the plug and tell me if it's plugged into the wall."

[pause] "Yes, it is."

[Hmm. Well, that's interesting. I doubt s/he would have accidentally turned it off, and I don't want to send him/her hunting for the power switch because I don't know what kind of monitor s/he has and it's bound to have more than one switch on it. Maybe the video cable is loose or something.]

"When you were behind the monitor, did you notice that there were two cables plugged into the back of it, not just one?"

"No."

"Well, there are. I need you to look back there again and find the other cable."

[muffled] "Okay, here it is."

"Follow it for me and tell me if it's plugged securely into the back of your computer."

[still muffled] "I can't reach."

"Uh huh. Well, can you see if it is?"

[clear again] "No."

"Even if you maybe put your knee on something and lean way over?"

"Oh, it's not because I don't have the right angle--it's because it's dark."

"Dark?"

"Yes--the office light is off, and the only light I have is coming in from the window."

"Well, turn on the office light then."

"I can't."

"No? Why not?"

"Because there's a power outage."

("A power--!?!" ...[AAAAAAARGH!]) "A power outage? Aha! Okay, we've got it licked now. Do you still have the boxes and manuals and packing stuff your computer came in?"

"Well, yes, I keep them in the closet."

"Good! Go get them and unplug your system and pack it up just like it was when you got it. Then take it back to the store you bought it from."

"Really? Is it that bad?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is."

"Well, all right then, I suppose. What do I tell them?"

"Tell them you're TOO STUPID TO OWN A COMPUTER!" [slam]

DIGITAL MATRIMONY

Last year a friend of mine upgraded Girlfriend 1.0 to Wife 1.0 and found that it's a memory hog leaving very little system resources for other applications. He is only now noticing that Wife 1.0 also is spawning Child-Processes which are further consuming valuable resources. No mention of this particular phenomena was included in the product brochure or the documentation, though other users have informed him that this is to be expected due to the nature of the application. Not only that, Wife

1.0 installs itself such that it is always launched at system initialization where it can monitor all other system activity. He's finding that some applications such as PokerNight 10.3, BeerBash 2.5, and PubNight 7.0 are no longer able to run in the system at all, crashing the system when selected (even though they always worked fine before). At installation, Wife 1.0 provides no option as to the installation of undesired Plug-Ins such as MotherlnLaw 55.8 and BrotherlnLaw Beta release. Also, system performance seems to diminish with each passing day.

Some features he'd like to see in the upcoming wife 2.0:
•A "Don't remind me again" button •Minimize button •An install shield feature that allows Wife 2.0 to be installed with the option to uninstall at anytime without the loss of cache and other system resources.

I myself decided to avoid all of the headaches associated with Wife 1.0 by sticking with Girlfriend 2.0. Even here, however, I found many problems. Apparently you cannot install Girlfriend 2.0 on top of Girlfriend 1.0. You must uninstall Girlfriend 1.0 first. Other users say this is a long standing bug which I should have been aware of. To make matters worse, the uninstall program for Girlfriend 1.0 doesn't work very well, leaving undesirable traces of the application in the system.

Another thing that stinks -- all versions of Girlfriend continually pop up little annoying messages about the advantages of upgrading to Wife 1.0.

***** BUG WARNING ********
Wife 1.0 has an undocumented bug. If you try to install Mistress 1.1 before uninstalling Wife 1.0, Wife 1.0 will delete Msmoney files before doing the uninstall itself. Then Mistress 1.1 will refuse to install, claiming insufficient resources.

***** Bug work-arounds *********
To avoid the above bug, try installing Mistress 1.1 on a different system. Another solution would be to run Mistress 1.0 via a UseNet provider under an anonymous name. Here, beware of the viruses which can accidentally be downloaded from the UseNet.

Severe Storms Ravage Area

A *Shoemaker Village* Special Report

Severe storms ravaged the area on the night of Sunday, May 31, 1998, sending residents of the area scrambling for cover.

There were two major storms that night, the greater of which hit at 10:25 pm, causing a tornado to touch down in Willow Grove. Another, weaker, storm passed by at around 2:00 the next morning.

Schools were closed for two days after that, June 1 and 2. "I never thought that my kids would be having snow days in June!" neighbor Henry Sokolowski replied when asked his point of view. "I was wondering why Upper Moreland didn't return their snow days to their students at the end of the year."

Several tornadoes were sighted around the area. One, in Willow Grove, severely damaged the house of Christopher Sokolowski's third grade teacher. When told of the news, Christopher was shocked.

The same tornado was thought responsible for the extensive damage in the area where the Assistant Editor for the *Village*, Matthew Care, lives. "There's trees down all over the place and power lines in the street!" he exclaimed on the day after the storm, over the phone when called by a member of the *Village* staff.

The tornado was rated F0, the weakest of ratings on the Fujita Scale, which is used to measure the strength of tornadoes. The rating system uses numbers from 0 to 5. A rating of F0 means that the tornado had winds from 70 to 110 miles per hour. There were also two other

tornadoes that formed in the area, one in Northeast Philadelphia and one in upper Montgomery county, rated F2 and F3 respectively.

Power was also cut off to much of the area. During the same conversation as mentioned above, Matthew reportedly commented, “There’s nothing to do! I can’t go on AOL, write my novel [*The Tomb of the Unknown World*], or anything!” Matthew also reports that his family waited in line for an hour while the electric company in the area handed out dry ice to all of its customers without power. 130,000 people lost electricity during the storm in Pennsylvania.

Our neighborhood was hit rather lightly, however, the severe storm passing to the north and west of residents. “I saw a lightning strike about a mile away,” said Christopher. “But the thunder wasn’t that loud here.” Christopher reports that he could not sleep until about 11:00pm, his usual bedtime being around 9:00.

Henry, upon inspecting the damage to his yard, found only a felled branch about two feet long and a few leaves scattered about his yard. His wife, Jean Sokolowski, said her garden showed no signs of damage after the storm and that there were even flowers on the tomato plants due to the heavy rain.

Even so, residents took precautions against the impending storms before they struck. “I saw the warning come up when I was watching the end of the Bulls game,” said Tony Hoffman, who lives in a corner house of the neighborhood. “Then we [his family] went down the basement and slept there for the rest of the night.” Henry Sokolowski, upon hearing of this, reportedly said, “Next time, I’m not taking any chances. We’ll go down the basement if this happens again.”

Although the neighborhood was hit lightly, work on Pioneer Road did not continue on June 1.

Of course, all this news brings up speculation about why storms this strong would have formed in the area. As to that, there is no clear answer. Although the El Niño phenomenon, which caused much of the unusual weather this winter, is believed by most people to be the cause, this is not the case because it has weakened.

But one thing <u>is</u> for sure. The storm has caused damage that will take months to repair. As Christopher Sokolowski said, “This is the worst storm I’ve ever seen!”

The Storm: Pictures



Figure 1: This tree was uprooted on the lawn of the Fox Chase Bank.



Figure 2: This stump is all that was left after the storm. The tree was blown 35 feet away.



Figure 3: This picture depicts what was left of Ellis Road after the tornado hit.



Figure 4: This tree lay across Allison Road, blocking it to traffic.



Figure 5: These lampposts and power lines were knocked down at the foot of Allison Road.

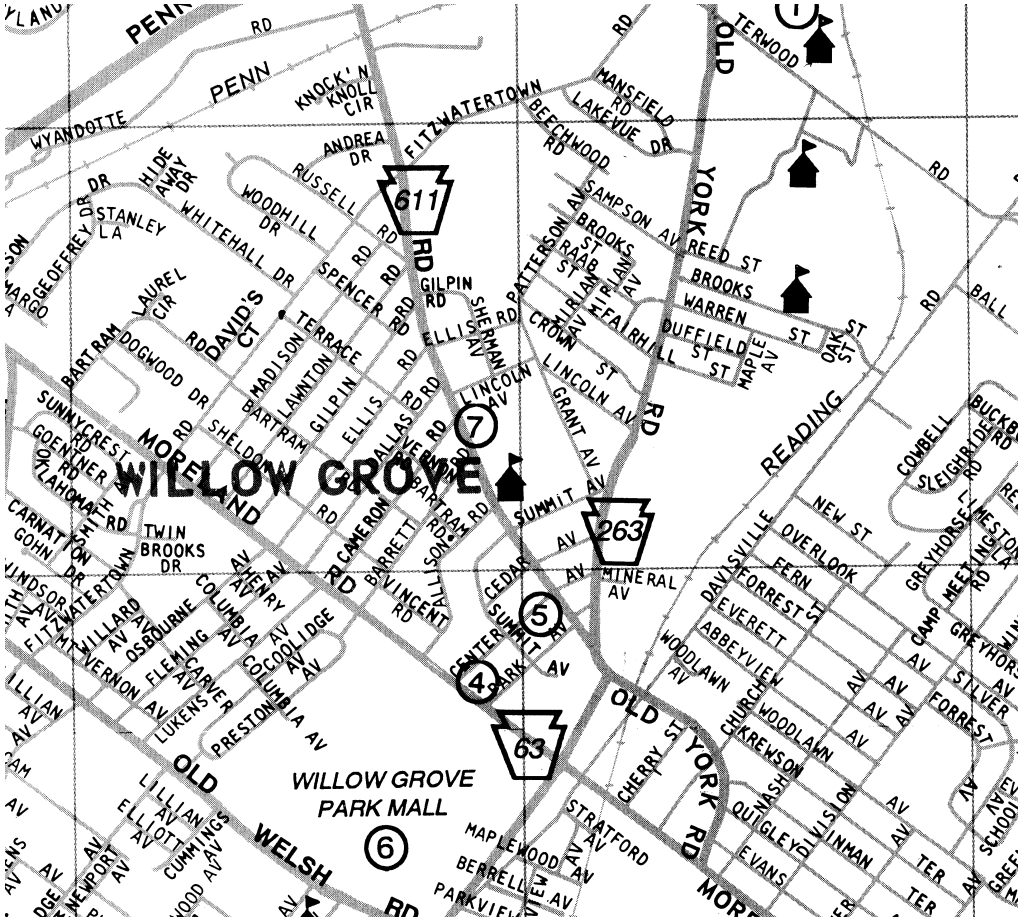


Figure 6: This tree was destroyed. Notice the undamaged trees and houses in the background.

The Storm: Foreword

The following story is a documentary of a tornado that hit my area one month ago. One result was a loss of power to my area. Although my street was one of the last to regain electricity, I, blessed with a laptop, was able to record the events of the storm as it happened. While the story focuses on my family, it includes the details of the damage sustained by the rest of my neighborhood and full color photos of the damage. I did work very hard on it, and I would like you to read it. This is entirely true. There are no fabrications or exaggerations.

Throughout the piece there are superscripted numbers. These numbers correspond to pictures on page 14. A map of the route taken by us when we inspected the damage is shown below. The yellow dot represents my house while the red one represents the starting point of our walk.



The Storm

A Documentary by Matthew Care

It was about 10:30 on Sunday, May 31. It had been an extraordinarily hot day and the evening brought no sign of comfort. As I had watched television earlier, the show would be periodically interrupted by moving subtitled warnings from the National Weather Service. It informed the viewers that there was a tornado warning for certain areas; but at the time, none were near my area. I predicted that the tornado would hit another area while my neighborhood would be spared from the brunt of the storm. This turned out not to be the case. So, at about 10:30, the wind had picked up a great deal and it was beginning to rain. As the minutes passed, the wind grew very strong and was accompanied by lightning. Fearing for the structural integrity of my windows, I went into my sister's room to camp out. It became downright frightening, and it was nice to have some company.

In an attempt to use as little electricity as possible, we turned off all lights, fans, and extraneous appliances. With all the wind howling outside, there could still not be detected any cooling breeze passing through the windows. It became quite hot and we had to turn the fan back on. As uncomfortable as I was, I did eventually fall asleep and, being a rather heavy sleeper, was able to sleep through several hours of lightning and thunder. But in an instant, I don't know exactly what time, I was shaken awake by the loudest thunder you've ever heard. It sounded like ten thousand fireworks being set off in the Grand Canyon. And in the same instant, the sky was lit up and the wind began to howl like a demon, which actually made sense since it seemed as if the gates of hell had opened up. My sister, who, I found out later, hadn’t been sleeping at all, leapt up to close the windows which we had left open in a vain attempt to get some cross-ventilation. After that, we just sat there holding each other, scared to death. Only then did we notice that the ceiling fan had slowly lost its momentum and the clock had gone out. We now estimate that the power went out at about 1:20 a.m.. In several minutes my mom appeared in the doorway and we willingly followed her directions to go downstairs to my parents’ bedroom.

The first thing that I noticed was that it was slightly cooler in there then it had been upstairs. And

still the weather was not letting up.

We closed their open windows as well and decided to get to a still safer place. My mom, sister, and I went to sit on the basements steps, the farthest place in the house from any windows. My dad did not join us. My father is a very interesting man. He decided to stay in his room and sleep rather than join us.

As we huddled on the basement steps in the dark, there was nothing to do but listen to the thunder and the storm raging outside. It was quite hot there too, but I braved the heat and the blackness, these being a small price for safety.

When the storm had subsided somewhat, my mom went upstairs first. I stayed on the steps with my sister some while longer before we too went upstairs and lay on the floor of my parents' bedroom. I was lying at the foot of their bed, somewhat in the way of anyone trying to get to the bathroom. I once again fell asleep, confident that the worst was over...it had to be.

My first "stimulation" through my semi-consciousness was my sister telling my dad:

"You can get by. His head's there and the rest of him is there. Just step carefully."

The next thing I knew, I got kicked in the face but was too tired to cry out in pain or even care.

The next time I was disturbed, my dad was asking me where the flashlight was. I had it next to me somewhere on the floor. Still asleep, I groped around for it and held it up, saying,

"There. Leave me alone."

I was then disturbed at 4:00 in the morning by the chatter on KYW, being spued from a battery powered radio that my dad had.

Some time later I was informed that school was going to be closed. While I was quite happy and enthusiastic about that on the inside, the most I could project at the time was a grunt of acknowledgment.

When I woke up under my own power at, I'm guessing, 6:30, we all had a look outside. Our trashcans, which we usually keep on a patio on the side of our house, had blown off the patio, up a tiny set of stairs and around to the front of our house, where we found them.

While we were assembling, my dad immediately went off on one of his harangues about how we didn't understand the gravity of the situation, and how this, that, and something else needed doing. I am certain that the man *thrives* on chaos. Any situation, no matter the cause, in which he can take charge, there isn't a shred of doubt that he will.

When my dad went to work, my sister went also, so she could bring the car back. My dad had told her to get ice at the store, and I volunteered to help. But somewhat annoyed by a lack of sleep because of my dad's compulsiveness, she hurried out without me.

I went out to put the trashcans back on the patio. Amazingly, we had very little damage. And then I saw the most amazing thing. My sister had put a small potted plant outside by the steps. It was still sitting there. There we were, surrounded by the wake of a tornado, with huge trees surely being pushed down, and this little plant was still sitting there, watching it all.

When we had put the contents of the refrigerator into coolers, and the other household duties had been tended to, my mom left for work.

On the way, she dropped my sister and I off a couple blocks away and we walked around our neighborhood to assess the damage.

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We first walked out to Fitzwatertown Road and followed it down to where it intersects Welsh Road. In the middle of the sidewalk, on the side on which we were walking, was the huge metal sign from the Mobil gas station across the street. As we continued to walk, we came upon a tree.[1] I've seen uprooted trees before, but never like this. It was a rather large tree, and it *and* a large portion of the ground it had been planted in were uprooted onto the lawn of the Fox Chase bank. We turned down Madison Road. My friend lives on that street and we saw him outside his house. We exchanged some neighborly comments, but I was most interested in the splintered stump on his lawn. I had been to his

house a couple times but had never noticed the tree. Now all that remained were some shards of wood poking up out of the ground.[2] But where was the tree? After having been broken, the tree which had been secured on one side of his lawn had been blown across his lawn and landed half on his neighbor's property.

We walked down Madison and turned right on Sheldon. As we approached each street, we surveyed the surroundings. Most streets had damage but not too much. When we came up on Ellis, my breath was taken away.[3] From where we were standing, we could not see Moreland, just one block away. There was no road! It was entirely trees, one big dense urban forest. We continued down the street but saw only damage that was insignificant compared to the destruction on the other end of Ellis.

Sheldon dead ends in Barret. At that intersection is a park. It had had some major reconstruction several years back, including the planting of many new trees. The sight was unbelievable. There was not a tree in the entire park left standing. Every one had blown over. Turning right at the park, we, avoiding a downed power line, walked down Barret and turned on Vincent. The damage on that street was also not extraordinary. And finally, by following that road, we came to the bottom of our own, which I had not yet seen that day.

It is possible that the damage on some other streets was worse than I have said. But in my mind it all pales next to the damage on my own street for the mere fact that it was "so close to home." When we turned left onto my street, after walking about twenty five feet, the road became noticeably more blocked. Hum...why was that so...oh yeah...A HUGE FOUR FOOT THICK OAK TREE HAD COME DOWN AND WAS LAYING ACROSS IT![4] The tree came within feet of landing on a house across the street. After we walked around that, the next thing which caught my eye was a streetlamp which had fallen over and, in the process, brought down three or four power lines with it.[5] We avoided that side of the street for days to come.

After we got home and used the last of the warm water to do dishes...there was nothing else to do. You'd be surprised how much you take luxuries like electricity and hot water for granted--not that I'm

complaining. I happen to love roughing it. Every summer I go up to my aunt's cabin in New Hampshire. If I were mauled by a bear, a mile of water prevents anyone from even knowing. So, I was quite able to make due with what we had.

Actually, there wasn't *nothing* to do, just nothing fun. While we had made it through the storm unscathed, we were not completely without our share of debris. One of my dad's instructions was to clean up the yard. My sister and I got a bag and picked up all of the litter that was on the ground. It was going to have to be done sooner or later, but the storm just accelerated the wait. We have several trees in our front yard which never look nice. They were there when we moved in, and we always talked about cutting them down but never did. While my sister and I were outside, we considered the trees, more weathered looking than ever now. Our rationalization for what happened next was this: We didn't get our fair share of destruction, so we're going to make our own. We proceeded to prune the trees. It may not sound like fun, but it was the most excitement that I would have that day.

After completing that task I had lunch and called around to see who had power. My two friends who live near me had lost it, but one had a generator. I called *Village* headquarters, which apparently had never lost power. The storm had in fact passed that area right by, and editor, Stephen Sokolowski, didn't believe the things I told him had happened in my area. This is one of the reasons that I decided to write it down.

We had arranged for me to go see Stephen that afternoon and work on the *Village*, but these plans fell through later. I was reading my book when my dad called. He had heard that dry ice was being distributed to those who were without power. It was our job to find out where and then go get some. The closest distribution site to us was a nearby shopping center. We drove there despite its closeness and stood in line under the blazing sun. This was far from fun, but it was a unique experience. When we took our place in line, it had been backed up for some time while a new truck was on its way. When the truck finally got there, the people could have mobbed it and become disorderly, but they didn't. In the midst of the crisis, the value of common courtesy was not lost on people. They rallied and made friendly banter.

When my sister had to go to the car to get me, for I, not knowing how long it would take, had been waiting there, a kindly gentleman behind her saved her spot. I was very impressed. When we had received our ice we raced home and put it in the freezer.

But the truck had arrived slightly behind schedule and the wait resulted in my sister leaving later for work than usual. She therefore could not drive me to Stephen's house, and no other transportation could be arranged, so I never went. After my sister had left for work I settled in to read my book. It was my understanding that, if I had been in school that day, I was to have finished reading Great Expectations. Though this later turned out to be false, I read diligently through the day, for I was very far from completion.

When I could read no longer, I got up and looked for something else to do. Then I saw it. It had literally been right in front of me. My laptop had been sitting on a chair in the living room. I could have played games, but I took this to be a sign of sorts and decided that I had to write down the events of the day passed and the days to come.

But I bore easily and when I had to take a break, I went outside to practice golf in our yard. The weather was very nice now and the neighborhood seemed reborn. Both my parents arrived home at the same time because my sister took one car and my mom had to pick my dad up at work to bring him home. They had not walked around like I had that morning and they were going to go explore now. I continued to practice in the yard until they got back.

When we all went inside I brought them up to date on what I'd done that day and helped them get ready for that evening. We got candles from the basement and I told my dad how to light the stove without power. In two words, very carefully.

As we ate supper I told them about the ice. My dad was unclear because I couldn't give a very detailed account. Not knowing how much we got, but at the same time, not suspecting it to be enough, my dad said we were going back down after supper for more. When we went back we took two shopping bags. Upon arrival it seemed like the trucks had gone. There were no people. But they were still there

and we walked up to get our ice, which this time was given to us prebagged. Beside the ice truck there was a Red Cross van and as we walked by, they gave us a half dozen sandwiches.

When we got home we were able to reassess what was going to reside in the freezer for the duration of the outage. We finalized the food situation and put all the ice where we deemed it necessary. With the sun going down, there wasn't much more time to do anything. Some rumors had been confirmed that schools would again be closed the next day. I went upstairs to continue reading and in between write more of this story. I migrated downstairs to wait for my sister to come home that night and ended up falling asleep on the sofa.

When I awoke in the morning, I found that my dad had already been taken to work and my mom had just left as well. After I had woken up mentally I called the *Village* again to see if I could go over that day. It was completely inconvenient at that time and I was never able to make it over. I called some of my other electricity dependent friends to see what they were doing. They already had power back, but one couldn't leave the house and the other was still so deluded and frustrated with what had happened that he didn't want to do anything. Having a car, my sister had made arrangements with one of her friends to use their shower. I was bored and needed to charge my laptop battery. My sister dropped me off at my friend's house and I stayed for about one hour. While my battery charged, I used *his* computer and played *his* Playstation, but he had plunged so far into a state of ennui that he couldn't even get up off the couch to do more than let me in.

My friend's mom came home just as my sister arrived and I mentioned the state of plumbing at our house. I was just being offered a shower when I was hurried out. My sister had to get to work and I needed to be left at our house. At home I hurriedly packed a lunch for her and she left slightly late. I was then left to amuse myself yet again.

I was reading when the phone rang. It was the old friend whose tree had blown across the yard. He had power and he was generally wondering if I wanted to do something. I told him to ride down to my house, and I would go back with him. After I hung up, I got an idea. When he arrived I sprang it on

him.

"Can I use your shower?" I asked.

Being such a great friend he answered with a welcoming and enthusiastic,

"Yes."

Counting on this, I had already packed a towel and a change of clothes. I got my bike and, avoiding downed power lines and ducking under yellow police tape on his street, we both rode back to his house.

I had promised him the last time that I saw him that I would help him with a certain piece of software. Upon arrival I tried installing it on his computer, but it didn't work. With this failure there came a sort of awkward silence, and I thought of this as as good a time as any to use his facilities. I got my shower and hung out there some time longer. When I went in his room, which looked like a tornado had gone through it also, I noticed numbers printed on sheet metal. They were the numbers from the gas station sign which had blown across the street.

I had also taken my laptop to get charged up again. (I had used it in between the visits to my friends). When I realized that I had to leave, it was not charged all the way. I also needed to get air in my bike tires. My friend took my bike across the street to the Mobil which had reopened and got air for me. Then he escorted me home.

When I walked in, my mom was very angry with me because I came in an hour past supper, which consisted of hash browns and other things out of our cooler. Those things didn't sound too appetizing, but the Red Cross had apparently been delivering food door to door. I found an untouched pizza on the counter which had been donated by Crown Pizza. I made short work of half of it though it was cold.

Under the impression that I was to have finished my book by the following day, I settled down and tirelessly read until I was finished at about 10:30. Knowing there would no further reprieve of school, I knew I had to get to bed at a decent time. I took a flashlight and went upstairs. It was dark and quiet. Making the most of the dimming light, I packed my things for school and got ready for bed. I lay there

for half an hour trying to fall asleep. Sometime after 11:00, I heard my sister come in and I went downstairs. I told her what I'd done that day and helped myself to another slice of pizza. I was quite tired now and I fell asleep quickly.

The next morning I was woken up by my dad yelling up the steps. This wasn't changed by the power outage--that's how I usually get up in the morning. Since I didn't know what time it was, I was late getting downstairs that morning. When I was supposed to leave I wasn't ready to go, so I took my time and got my sister to drive me to school.

When I got home that day I was pleasantly surprised to see that the power was back on. I was home alone and I made the most of the luxury back in our possession. I turned on my tv, my computer, the radio, and all the lights. Then I just sat there for a while and soaked in the electronic glow. By subtracting the default time on my clock radio from the proper time on my computer, I calculated that the power had come back on at 11:03 that morning.

It was over.

The Storm: Afterword

The storm occurred on May 31, but I did not finish the story until June 29. I do not particularly like to write, but I put all my time into the finished product. The storm was quite real to me, and I really put my soul into the story.

This story does disclose a great many personal details about my family. This doesn't bother me, nor should it bother any other reader. But...To my family--who I know is reading this--I'm sorry, and get over it.

Thank you to my kind and generous friend who made me feel so welcome at his house on Tuesday. There have been several storms since the tornado hit my area, but none of them came close to the power of the one on that night. I feel quite confident in saying that it was the biggest storm of my life.

Keep reading *Shoemaker Village* and *The Tomb of the Unknown World*!

-Matthew Care

Food and Service in our Schools

I think that the food and the service in Upper Moreland cafeterias is excellent. There are so many lines with different foods for you to choose from. If you are a vegetarian, there is a line especially for you. If you want pizza (which is served every Tuesday and Thursday at U.M.H.S.), hot dogs, or hamburgers, our middle line is what you want, and we even have a hoagie line! The ladies behind the counters do their level best to get the food to the students quickly and efficiently. The food in Upper Moreland cafeterias is scrumptious and it gives you your necessary healthy eating requirements for the day. Some people are going to say that the food is not cooked or the fries are burned. For those people, I have one simple question. Would you like to have a hot and nutritious meal for a low price, or would you like no food at all like the homeless people on the streets of Philadelphia and every other big metropolis in the world? People are starving day after day to get a good meal. You can't live on fast food twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You need to eat a variety of foods. Upper Moreland gives you that opportunity to eat a variety of foods every day. You might not say it now, but someday you will be thankful that we have cafeteria food. If your parents can't make you anything for lunch, you can't eat a small bag of potato chips and a can of Coca-Cola for lunch. That is where the cafeteria food comes in. You can have a slice of pizza, a box of french fries, and a carton of chocolate milk for $2.50. In conclusion, I would like to say this. The next time you eat a cafeteria meal, or any meal for that matter, think about the people in foreign countries and in the U.S.A. that are fighting to get a sip of water and a bite to eat, and you will know how lucky you are.

Cafeteria Food: Hard to Swallow, or Some Say

If nothing else can be said for the lunches and food service in our school, then let it be known that there are definitely some things that need improvement. I can't think of any way more creative than to just list them.

I have nothing against cheese. No one appreciates cheese more than me; but if you don't like cheese, then you simply cannot eat in our cafeteria. The french fries are always undercooked, soggy, and disgusting. The main course is pizza three days a week. Giuseppe's, the place where they get it from, isn't even that good. The chicken and beef are always undercooked. The one thing that is worth eating is the Tater Tots, which are only served one or two days a week, every other week.

All of this sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? And I'm only being objective. The truth is that I don't care. I'm a scavenger. I never bring money or food, and I get by from mooching off my friends. I hardly pick food out of the trash; but when I have nothing else to eat, I usually choke down the disgusting french fries.

Maybe if some money were put toward what's going into the students here, things would be better. The school plans to spend $25,000 on a new fitness center for the school. If they want to keep us healthy, they could start by making sure that we weren't eating red meat!

The UM Food Services Program

Unlike most of the other people writing on this topic, I have decided not to begin with a fancy verbose introduction or a paragraph that leads you into the topic. I will just state it outright: the food at Upper Moreland High School is **AWFUL**! The cafeteria food at UMHS needs dramatic improvement immediately. To get a picture of the conditions in the cafeteria, let me begin with a description.

When I was in 8th grade, I used to buy school lunches every day. I always ignored all the cartoons that said that school food was disgusting and that portrayed the mean old cafeteria ladies slopping a spoonful of mashed potatoes with two cups of gravy onto the platter. I just thought that they were joking about the food. I never realized that in some schools, the food could be that bad.

The Middle School food was fine. Except for their soggy donuts on Mondays, their food actually was edible, if not more. But at UMHS, the food is disgusting. There are three lines at UMHS, each (usually) serving a different thing. If you believe that this means that you can have more variety for lunch, then you are sadly mistaken. For example, one of the lines serves the school's baked pizza (actually better than the pizza served imported from Giuseppe's, as I'll tell you later) on Mondays and Wednesdays. Another serves pizza on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So you could, if you wanted, get pizza four days a week. In addition, sometimes the third line will serve pizza along with the first on those days, decreasing the variety of food in the cafeteria.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the school serves Giuseppe's pizza, which it supposedly gets from the above mentioned pizza parlor. When the pizza is served, it is cold, has enough cheese to drown someone (especially if they are always getting colds, like me), and is a small portion. The other lines, on these days, serve hoagies, which are also disgusting, as commented on by several teachers and students. Nothing else is made.

On the remaining days of the week, you have the option to buy sandwiches from the center line of the cafeteria. These cost $1.60 each, are usually cold, and **all** have enormous amounts of cheese that seem

to increase with each passing day. As you move down the line, you have the option to purchase a drink with your meal. These range from iced tea and lemonade to milk and soda. Although I've never tried the iced tea or lemonade on account of my allergies to citrus fruits, I can say that, strangely, I've never heard any complaints about them. They are the *only* part of the UMHS food service that is acceptable. The milk, which you can also buy, is always warm by the last lunch, because the ice in which the workers place the milk usually melts and is never replaced. The fruit punch is generic and repulsive.

And at last, I have the pleasure to introduce you to the fries at UM, the worst of the impossibly disgusting food. Most of the time they are soggy and undercooked, and sometimes they are burned, but they are never cooked just perfectly. Most of the time, they have standard fries, smashed into a container and loaded with salt. (Who said that school meals should be about nutrition?) Sometimes, they have fries, even more disgusting, that are batter dipped and undercooked, like Burger King's new fries. And rarely, they have Tater tots, some of the times being cooked enough, but most of the time brownish-black with weird black spots in the middle. Over the year, there have been very few times that I have been satisfied with UM's fries, or has anyone else for that matter. The other lines, from which I do not buy, produce tasteless, disgusting trash that I need not indulge in any further.

However, even with all of these outrageous items that they call "food", many students continue to purchase lunch from the school. At times, on the Giuseppe's pizza days, the line stretches halfway to the door and the wait can be as long as 1/2 hour. On other days, when the food is better (if you can call any of this school's food better), the lines are half as long and move faster.

There is some relief in this bleak story. Recently, the food has improved in quality. The meatball sandwich that I ate on the last day of school actually was *hot*! Although that was a little too late for the school to improve its food program this year, it would be to their advantage to work on it for next year. I sincerely hope that UM decides to clean up its cafeteria service, that students begin to realize that the food is revolting, and that they discontinue to buy the junk that the cafeteria serves. Otherwise, the school should stop selling to their students because there will be nobody left to buy their foods as they are now.

Monopoly

by Christopher Sokolowski

One day, I was playing Monopoly with my friend Tony, my brother Steve, and my grandmother and grandfather. I had all the orange and green properties, my brother had all the purple properties, Tony had the light blue and the bluish-purple properties, my grandmother had all the red properties, and my grandfather had the blue and the yellow and the railroads. Suddenly there was a flash and I ended up in a partly orange and partly green house. THOSE WERE THE ONLY TWO COLORS!!!!! I went outside and walked six sidewalk blocks. Suddenly a police car came. The officer arrested me. I was sent to jail. He gave me a pair of dice. He said if I rolled a double in three turns or paid $50 I could get out, but if I didn't roll a double in three tries, I would have to pay $50 anyway. I rolled a double and got out. I walked seven more sidewalk blocks. I landed on a space that read COMMUNITY CHEST. I picked up the top card. It said GET OUT OF JAIL FREE. I kept it in my pocket. Then I walked three sidewalk blocks. FREE PARKING, the sidewalk block read. Suddenly it began to rain money. I collected all 2,509 dollars of it. Then I walked 12 sidewalk blocks. I stopped at my orange and green house. I was exhausted. I got something to drink. Then I walked eight sidewalk blocks. I found $200 dollars lying on the ground. I picked it up and put it in my pocket. Then I walked 10 sidewalk blocks. I saw my brother in jail. I hated him anyway, so I wasn't sad. Then I walked seven sidewalk blocks. I landed on another COMMUNITY CHEST space.. The card said "GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL. DO NOT PASS GO. DO NOT COLLECT 200 DOLLARS." I went to the JUST VISITING space because I had the GET OUT OF JAIL FREE card. Then I heard a voice call "GO AROUND THE BOARD ONE MORE TIME AFTER YOU PASS GO AND THIS GAME WILL END." I obeyed the voice's command and walked on. I walked five sidewalk blocks and $200 dollars fell out of my pocket. When I reached down to get them, they were glued to the ground. I had to walk on. Then I walked 12 sidewalk blocks. Yet again I was on another COMMUNITY CHEST space. I picked the top card and it read WALK THREE SIDEWALK BLOCKS, SOMETHING EVEN BETTER WILL HAPPEN TO YOU THAN WHAT USUALLY DOES. I walked three sidewalk

blocks and I saw a big sign that read JACKPOT 000'000'000'000'1$ "WHAT?!" I said. Then the sign flipped over. 1,000,000,000,000 it read. Then a bill came down from the sky. It was a 1,000,000,000,000 dollar bill. I put it in my pocket. Then I walked eight sidewalk blocks. I heard water. Forty-eight gallons of water fell on me and $48 came out of my pocket and was washed away with the water, Then I walked 12 more sidewalk blocks. $200 rose from the ground and went into my pocket. Then I walked 10 sidewalk blocks and yet again, I saw my brother in jail. Then I walked twelve sidewalk blocks. I was on a CHANCE space. I picked up the top card. It said GET OUT OF JAIL FREE. I put it into my pocket. Then I walked eight sidewalk blocks. It was the GO TO JAIL space. I used my GET OUT OF JAIL FREE card to just go to the JUST VISITING space. Then I walked nine sidewalk blocks. Nothing happened. Then I walked three sidewalk blocks. I was on a CHANCE space. I picked the top card. It read GO TO GO. COLLECT $200. Then I saw a bright light coming from the sky. It was not the sun. Then a voice said "YOU'VE WON!!!!! EVERYONE IS NOW OUT OF THE GAME EXCEPT FOR YOU!!!!!" Then the light got so bright it blinded me for a moment. When my sight was back to normal, I was in some place with a ton of wires and circuit boards. Then there was a bright light. It kept blinking for five minutes. Then it stopped. I noticed I was in a computer, and the light was a CD-ROM drive. Then the CD-ROM drive gave off a very bright light and I couldn't see again. Then the light disappeared and I was back at my home. Everything was back to normal. I noticed that that mysterious voice said THE GAME WILL END not EVERYTHING WILL RETURN TO NORMAL. I saw my grandmother, grandfather, Tony, and Steve sitting at the table. My grandmother and grandfather left the room and started making dinner. "LET'S PLAY GOLDENEYE!!!!!" we all said at the same time, and we rushed downstairs.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 12

"Did you leave it outside?" Mike asked, panicked. He paced around the area, changing directions randomly, and almost falling over when he bumped into a wall. Meanwhile, everyone searched around frantically.

"Everybody, calm down!" Christopher yelled. "We're not going to get anywhere by panicking like this. Katie, when do you remember having it last?"

"I used it to open the door," she said. "That was the last time, no, wait - I put it down on the ground when I helped Chapin treat the wounded."

"Where was that?" Christopher asked, staying calm in appearance and tone of voice.

"Over there," she replied, pointing toward the opposite direction of Christopher, to where a group of knights were lying down to rest before they continued.

"Look over there," ordered Christopher. The group hurried over to the location of the knights, and after they moved, searched the area to find nothing.

"I just thought of something!" Chapin said. "If we don't find the stone, we might not be able to leave this tower! Remember how Katie used the stone to open the door?"

"Then we must find the stone," Christopher replied. They continued to search around the whole room. Finally, Dave gave a shout, and everybody rushed toward him.

"What happened?" Christopher asked calmly. "Did you find the stone?"

"Yes!" Dave exclaimed. "But....look!" He pointed to what appeared to be the Hadar Stone, floating in the air near the wall! Just then, the others reached his position and gasped.

"Katie, try to touch it," Christopher said. She promptly went over to the stone and picked it up with no problems. Then she put it down, and it dropped to the ground. No matter what she did, she could not duplicate the strange floating incident.

"Well," Mike commented. "At least we found the stone. Now, should we go upstairs and check out what's in the room?"

Just them, Sean approached them and, after inquiring what they were doing and learning that they were going upstairs, volunteered to stay downstairs to watch over the knights, should any more weird happenings occur.

Mike, Dave, Katie, and Christopher ascended the stairs and went up the narrow stairwell after they reached the terrace. After ten minutes, they were standing at the locked door at the top of the tower. Katie held out the Hadar Stone to the door, and at once it opened quickly, slamming against the wall on the other side of the door with a loud BANG!

They were looking into a room, tiny compared to the large room downstairs or even the second floor terrace. There was another door on the other side. The room was adorned with furniture and decorations that hung on the walls, which seemed if they should have decayed over the ages. There was a small window on the side of the tower that they had not noticed from the ground. Mike rushed into the room and over to the window and fell back in amazement after looking out.

Everybody else approached the window cautiously, not knowing what had made Mike fall back. Soon they found out, though, after looking out the window and seeing that they were at an incredible height, so high that they could see the area for miles around them. The other two towers, which were too far away to see from the ground, were now visible to the north and east. After looking, they all fell back and stopped to think about what to do next.

"This looks like a door," Christopher commented, pointing to what appeared to be the door that many of them had seen when they entered the room.

"It's locked, like all the others," Chapin said when she tried the door.

"Maybe the Hadar Stone will open this one, too," Mike suggested, having recovered from his

scare.

"OK, let's try it!" Katie exclaimed. "Everybody stand back!" The rest of the party stood to the left of the door in case anything would pop out as soon as it opened.

Nothing popped out, in fact, the door didn't even open! Everybody returned to their previous stances.

"OK, now how do we open this door?" Mike asked.

"Did you try the knob again?" Dave asked. Christopher did, and replied promptly, "It's locked."

Katie put the stone down on the ground to think. When nobody came up with any ideas, she went to pick up the stone and try again, but then she noticed that the stone was floating! The stone hovered an inch or two above the ground, shining brightly.

"That's what happened before!" Dave exclaimed. "Maybe it can open the door! Katie, see if you can get the stone to touch the door while it's still floating."

Katie got down on her hands and knees, and blew at the stone. Slowly but surely, the stone began to float toward the door, shining more brightly as it approached. Suddenly, there was a bright flash, and the door seemed to dematerialize to reveal more stairs leading upward, similar to the ones that they had just traversed coming up.

"Is it safe to go in?" Dave asked.

"Let's find out," Christopher said and then bravely stepped through the doorway to find that the stairs were solid. Motioning to the others, he began to climb the stairwell.

These stairs were narrow, so they had to travel single file, Christopher leading, and Chapin bringing up the rear. The stairs wound up and up. Christopher commented every once and a while on how they should be at the top of the tower by now, because from the ground, it didn't look as high as they were going.

They ascended the stairs for another fifteen minutes, stopping for several breaks due to exhaustion. But they finally reached the top of the staircase soon after and found another door. This one was locked, also, but simply touching it with the Hadar Stone opened it to an amazing sight.

They were standing on the roof of the tower, but it seemed *transparent* beneath their feet! A few hundred feet below them, the faint outline of the tower pierced the clouds and came upward, almost as if gravity and the wind didn't affect it.

"This is amazing!" Christopher exclaimed. Above them, the blue sky stretched in all four directions as far as they could see. From what they could tell, they had come at least half a mile up in the sky.

However, the edges of the tower were unprotected, like most of the other structures in the building, so everybody except Christopher huddled near the middle of the peak, should some strong wind gust come and blow them off. After he had examined the summit, Christopher went back to the rest of the group.

"OK, there's nothing here," Chapin said. "So why did we come all the way up here?"

"That's a good question," Christopher commented. "Why would a tower be built so high, and so protective, if there's nothing to protect?"

"We're supposed to do something," Katie suggested. "I can feel it."

"Might have something to do with the Stone yet again," Mike said.

"Try doing something with the stone," Dave told Katie.

She concentrated really hard to make the stone light, even tried to make it float like before, but it was to no avail. Nothing happened.

"Should we go back down?" Katie asked.

"I guess. But it's hard to tell whether the storm's ended or not. We would just have to wait down there."

"OK, let's go back down and see what's going on," Christopher said, and started back to the door.

Suddenly, there was a loud bang, and everybody turned around. Katie was lying on the floor, as if some force had pushed her over. The rest of the group rushed toward her to find that the Hadar Stone was

floating again, this time next to her, emitting what looked like lightning bolts from its side.

"LOOK!" Katie exclaimed, pointing to the floating stone. Everybody turned around and came back out of the doorway, transfixed on the stone.

Suddenly, the stone began to rise even higher until it was a full ten feet above the middle of the top of the tower. It stopped there for a while, and then suddenly there was a flash. The tower seemed to rise in the middle to reveal a pillar onto which the stone drifted. Suddenly, there was a flash, and a crystal that had emerged from the top of the pillar began shining bright yellow. In a few minutes, the stone dropped to the ground, but the pillar continued to shine. Everybody was astonished.

"Well," Christopher said in a dreamlike sense, "I think we've got our answer of what to do once we got here."

Katie went to examine the stone. Finding it undamaged, she brought it back to Christopher to look at.

"It doesn't appear that the stone has changed in any way," Christopher noticed. "But since we came to this tower, it was floating."

"That seems to me that that might signify that the tower is causing these events," Chapin commented.

"Well," Mike asked, breaking up the speculation and changing the tone of conversation to a businesslike manner. "What should we do now?"

"The same thing will probably happen in the other two towers," Dave said. "So we should go there and activate those stones to see what happens."

"That would be a good idea," Christopher said, "if it weren't raining and getting dark." Suddenly everybody noticed that the clouds were still intact below them and that the sky was becoming noticeably darker, especially in the east.

"Let's go back down to the base of the tower and rest for the night," Chapin suggested. This was accepted by everybody, and they began their descent.

When they arrived at the base of the tower, they filled in Sean about the events that had happened when they had been at the top, and then sat down to rest for the night because it was still raining.

The next morning, inside the tower it seemed to be the same as before. Christopher, Katie, Chapin, Dave, Mike, and Sean were sitting in a corner, carrying on a casual conversation. Many of the rest of the knights were around the area, eating, talking, or practicing with mock battles against each other.

Around what they judged to be mid-morning, the group agreed to try to go outside and venture to the other towers. Everybody thought that the knights should remain in the tower that they were currently in until the danger outside the towers had passed.

Katie held the Hadar Stone up to the point on the wall where they had come into the tower, and a door promptly appeared. Stepping through it, they entered a cold and damp outside world. Being mid-August, and as far north as they were, it was already beginning to feel slightly colder than it had been the week before.

They set their sights on the tower that was to the south of the one that they had just exited, and began to trek toward it. It was, they judged, about five miles between the towers, so it took them well over an hour to reach the tower. By this time, the fog had burned off, and the midday sun was beginning to shine through the clouds.

They arrived at the tower a few minutes later than they had planned, on account of the lack of resources that everybody had at their disposal. Their chief problem was the lack of fresh water that they had available. However, they noticed that there was a lake in the middle of the towers, and promptly filled their water bottles. When they reached the southern tower, there was no entrance, like the one that they had come from.

Katie held the Hadar Stone up to the wall, but, strangely, there was no response.

"OK," she said. "What am I doing wrong?"

"Nothing," Christopher said. "It should be opening."

The stone continued to shine as brightly as ever, but the door did not appear.

"What happened to the red stone?" Katie asked.

"It's here," Chapin responded, handing the stone to Katie.

"Hold it up to the door," Katie ordered. Chapin did so, but there was still no response.

Dave approached the tower and held the Falchion up to the door, but nothing happened that time either. Try as they might for the next ten minutes, there was nothing that they could do to gain entry to the tower.

Depressed and anxious, they began the long trek back to the tower from which they had come. By the time that they arrived, it was past midafternoon and becoming dark, so they decided to camp out for another night in the tower.

The next day, there was a conference held between the party and the knights.

"We weren't able to enter the tower," Christopher said. The bad news seemed to echo around the tower, reverberating lower and lower until the voice finally disappeared. There was a murmur that went up through the knights, but quickly subsided.

"Is there anything we can do to help?" Sean asked.

"See what you have," Christopher responded. "It could be used to attempt to enter the tower."

With the four hundred and fifty knights watching, Christopher asked everybody to search their bags. The party went around, and found nothing of interest until they saw a young knight, separated from the others, in a far corner.

"Can I see what you have? Christopher asked.

"Sure," he replied. Christopher looked through his bag, which was woven of grass intertwined with branches and old, worn cloth. Upon looking through, he discovered a ball, which looked quite like the Hadar Stone and the other stone, except this one was blue. It didn't shine but continued to stay dark. Christopher shouted to the other members of the party. Katie was the one to arrive first.

"It looks like the Hadar Stone," she was saying as the others approached. "But it's blue."

"Where did you get this?" Christopher asked the knight.

"It was my mother's. Before she died in a troll attack a few years back, she gave it to me. As far as I know, it's been passed down for generations in our family."

Chapin took the stone from Christopher to examine it more closely. The minute she touched it, it began to shine brightly, just like the Hadar Stone had when Katie had touched it.

"May we keep this?" Christopher asked the soldier.

"Yeah, sure. Just give it back to me when you're done with it, if you can."

After some quick reassurance, the group moved across the room to converse privately.

"I think I know what this is," Christopher said.

"What?"

"The Hadar Stone," said Christopher, "shone brightly the first time Katie touched it. At the time, I thought that there was only one stone. I was mistaken. This stone must be controlled by the water elemental."

"If this is so," Dave said after some thought, "then why can Katie control the Hadar Stone?"

"There's only one explanation for that," Christopher said with great suspense. "Katie was meant to be the fire elemental."

There was a great shock at this, and everybody was silent for a moment. Then Mike said, "How? She's not even from this world!"

"That probably isn't for us to know," Christopher responded. "Neither is why she was brought here. But we must keep trying to defeat Yavin."

At that point, there was a loud crash from across the room. A blood-curdling scream split the air; and by the time that the group had turned around, a knight was standing up, wildly gesturing at his pants. His pantlegs had caught on fire and he was running around frantically, trying to extinguish the blaze. Several knights near him moved away hurriedly to avoid injury.

"Hurry!" Christopher exclaimed, jumping over a bag in front of him and running across the floor.

He quickly emptied the contents of a knapsack and smothered the fire on the knight's legs. By that time, the rest of the group had reached Christopher.

Sean hurried over along with a few others. The victim had a large burn on his leg; but with some bandages, he would be fine. Christopher tore apart some old cloth and wrapped the knight's leg in it, washing off the cut first with some water.

"What happened?" Mike asked.

"All of a sudden," the man gasped, for he was in pain, "it just happened. There was no cause." These last four words caused a chill in everybody; but the man would say no more, no matter how much they pressured him.

"This is weird," Katie said, uneasy.

"Tell me about it!" Dave exaggerated.

"Let's rest for the night now!" Christopher said loudly so that all of the knights and the group could hear. "We'll move out tomorrow!"

There was no further conversation within the group that night, as everybody parted immediately after Christopher's announcement. Christopher and Sean talked for a while on the other side of the tower, but soon succumbed to slumber as did the rest.

The next day dawned bright, but not as early because they were so far north. There was a chill in the air as the party set out of the tower to see if the strange blue stone would open a door in one of the towers.

After they had traveled a substantial distance from the tower, they could see a bright yellow light emanating from the top of the tower they had just left, the same color as the Hadar Stone.

They continued onward to the tower. When they reached it, Katie tried the blue stone on all the parts of the tower, but, again, there was no response.

"Let's try the other one," Mike said with a sigh.

It took them an hour to walk to the next tower. The going was rough, because even though the day started out cold, it had became hot quickly.

When they reached the other tower, they tried the stone again and found that that tower opened in response to the stone. A door appeared in the side of the tower, and the group promptly went inside.

This tower was very similar to the last one, with a large ground floor with stairs protruding around the outer edges.

"Should we go up these stairs?" Katie asked Christopher.

"Let's go," Christopher said.

The group proceeded to begin climbing the stairs. However, they were stopped by a frightening whisper from a voice they had never heard before.

"They're all going to die!"