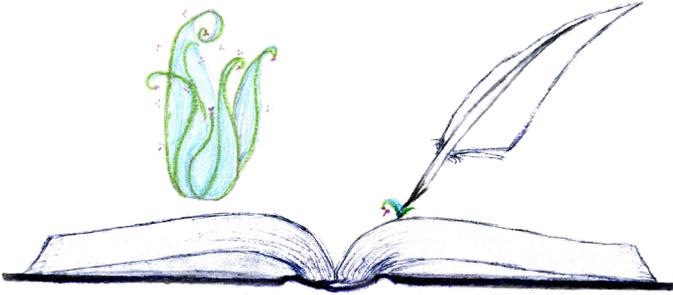




SUB~CREATION

Wheaton College | Fall 2018

Sub-Creation | Fall 2018



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In association with



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Dear Reader,

This issue of sub-creation contains both lighthearted adventures and darker, thought-provoking journeys, that we decided to hold in a balance. Throughout there is an exploration of new environments and unexpected experiences. This issue seems to testify to genre fiction's ability to lead the reader through meaningful imaginative reflection. As you read, allow these works to lead you into a contemplation on this fallen world or a deeper appreciation for God's creation.

I want to thank Beth Potterveld for contributing her editorial and logistical experience. John Colson was also integral to this process with his work in planning, publicity, and editing. And of course, we are grateful to Tolkien Society and WhInklings, advised by Laura Schmidt, for their ongoing support.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Williams

CONTRIBUTORS

Raymond Hanus ('22)

Raymond Charles Hanus III--a resident of Yorkville, Illinois--is a member of the class of 2022. He is currently pursuing an English major with an emphasis on writing. Raymond is the proud owner, designer, and gamemaster of a twenty-hour Lego board game known as Heroica Epic. The majority of his writings have centered on creating lore for the mysterious world of Heroica, mainly in the short story variety. His two "Captain Crepe" stories are set in this world, based on various characters and monsters from the game.

Katy Humnick ('20)

Katy is a junior English Writing major. She likes to write true things, and loves using fantasy as a means for that. She once sprained her ankle while sword-fighting with sticks in the woods somewhere in Germany. Later when she wrote an essay about it for gym class, her teacher thought she had made it up.

CONTRIBUTORS (cont.)

Peter Macolino ('22)

Peter Macolino was born and raised in Philadelphia, where he grew to love not being on the streets, from which his passion for writing grew. He is a self proclaimed “renaissance man” and a proud nerd, dabbling in acting, singing, soccer, baseball, D&D, heavy fantasy world-building, and of course creative writing.

He stands currently as a freshman studying English, his dream for the future to be a published author among the greats of fantasy.

Elizabeth Sublette ('21)

Elizabeth is a double major at Wheaton in Biblical Archaeology and Ancient Languages with a concentration in Greek. She is from a ski town in Utah (ah Mormons), and she has been writing since she was seven years old.

Staff

Elizabeth Williams ('19)

Elizabeth is a senior English Literature major. She mostly loves to read but also likes to write poetry from time to time. She enjoys painting portraits of friends and family.

Beth Potterveld (alumni '11)

Beth likes to write fantasy stories, of short or epic length. She also likes to write down any theological breakthroughs that bring her closer to peace with God (because if she doesn't write them down quickly, she completely forgets and her life is back to shambles the next morning). Although she has studied Spanish, Latin, Greek, German, Hebrew, ASL, and Elvish, she only speaks English.

Staff

John Colson ('22)

John is a freshman English major and an avid reader of fantasy, Westerns, literary fiction and poetry. He has spent his life on his family's ranch in central Montana, and is proud to say that his county has a population density of 0.8 people per square mile. He is still amazed that the Chicago area has ten times the population of his entire state, but is beginning to get used to the idea. In his spare time, John can often be found hiking, fishing, or skiing in Montana's mountain ranges; hunting; reading; writing poetry and short fiction; and reading some more. John famously loves beef, and would do almost anything to see more of it served at SAGA.

The Art of Narration by Elizabeth Sublette

There was a castle on a hill. Inside was the most beautiful family in all the kingdom as their love for each other only grew with each rising sun.

In the same castle was also the royal family.

The day the King and Queen's daughter turned thirteen, she was presented to the Court with much pomp and ceremony. Her name was Aurora because she was like the dawn; and, Aurora was the queen's mother's middle name. The King could not have cared less what his daughter's name was, as long as she was fair of face and temperament. And so she was; Aurora was beautiful beyond the ordinary and kind when she remembered to be. Mostly, she spent her time with her head in the clouds.

As the princess walked gracefully down the center of the crowd gathered to celebrate her coming of age, a wicked wizard appeared from the dark outreaches of the room. He was corrupted absolutely by greed, and sought to have the kingdom for himself. The Evil Wizard cast a villainous curse upon Aurora; who fell upon her hands and knees, and was transformed into a pure white swan. With a final cackle, the Evil Wizard fled with the princess to his black tower high above the plains of the

castle.

The King, after a nudge from his Queen, called for a quest. The knights and princes present assembled before him in a shining line of heroic might.

The first prince shook his head, upon being asked to take up the princess' plight, not wishing to expend the energy. He was rather lazy, and would have been sent to the church if his older brother had not caught the plague and died.

A second prince also refused to take the quest. He had his eyes on another princess. She was imprisoned by a dragon, which was much more frightening than an Evil Wizard. His princess was also rumored to be the most beautiful in the land, instead of simply being beautiful beyond the ordinary. If only he knew that no human had actually laid eyes upon her; he may have decided to err on the side of caution and claim a princess sure to be at least a little beautiful.

The third, and last, prince was brave and an accomplished swordsman. In fact, just last week, he had defeated an evil red dragon in the east. Unfortunately, he was preoccupied with discovering who he was now that he had defeated his nemesis, the aforementioned red dragon. In the midst of such an identity crisis the prince could not even imagine having to chase after the Evil Wizard.

The king looked to his most beloved knight,

one who had seen many battles and rescued a multitude of princesses. Surely, he would take up the quest. But the knight did not wish to rescue a swan. Especially if the swan did not become a princess again upon her rescue; as had happened last he rescued a princess. She had been stuck forever as a doe. While the poor princess had taken to her new life like a fish to the water, she had left her would-be rescuer confused and a little wary.

With no one else to call upon, the King and Queen hung their heads in sorrow. They would never be able to make an alliance with the islands to the south without their daughter. It seemed as if their dreams of retiring at a castle beside the sea had been thoroughly dashed upon the rocks.

Then, from out of the crowd, came another man. This man was eighteen summers, but rather small and plain for his age, more of a boy than a man. He was the son of a stableman and a noblewoman's sixth lady in waiting, the long awaited son of the most beautiful family in the kingdom: the family whose love for each other only grew with each rising sun. All this may explain why he did not look like a Hero, as he did not come from a royal, or even brave, family.

It was this non-royal, non-brave, and therefore non-heroic, boy who had stepped forward to take the quest and save Aurora, the unfortunate princess turned swan.

at the boy. The king ordered him to step aside so that another more worthy man might seek out his daughter and in effect win him back the isles in the south.

They chuckled, actually.

What?

The king and queen are not allowed to laugh uproariously. It is written so in their handbooks.

No, who are you?

I am the Hero. You were writing the story wrong, so I stepped in to help.

The Hero? That's ridiculous.

Ah, but, I am speaking; I must be the Hero.

Sure. But, you aren't supposed to talk.

I also have a name, in the event that you might want to know.

You don't have a name because this is a fairy tale, in which you aren't supposed to talk.

Ah, I see... Do you have a name?

I don't, as far as you are concerned.

Alas, I will have to discover your name later, dear Narrator. The King and Queen have stopped their chuckling. The story is beginning.

The boy insisted that he would go if another would not. Every knight and prince in the room immediately refused to help the princess, as they were not honor bound to offer their services once another man has volunteered. The king was forced to allow the young man to go after his swan. With

the matter settled, the Hero set out immediately.

No, I think I will sleep first, and then I should probably pack. One cannot reach the dark tower high above the plains of the castle in a day.

You don't get to decide.

Yes, I do. The princess does not deserve an ill-conceived rescue. I will sleep and pack. I can set out tomorrow.

Fine.

The Hero set out the next morning before dawn.

I am not really sure I want to go so early, maybe after dawn. Or noon, that is a good time to start an adventure.

Oh, is the great Hero feeling lazy?

Not necessarily-

Uh huh, get on the road.

As you wish, Narrator.

The Hero traveled a couple of miles before stopping just after noon in the shade of a large oak. The Hero was unaware that the oak was a popular spot for merchants to take shelter, and a band of bandits had claimed the spot for their hunting ground. Soon, the Hero was beset by ten men, all armed with knives, bows, and spears. If the princess' Hero had been one of the princes, or even one of the knights, she would not have had to fear for him; but the Hero was only a lowly stable man's son. Beloved though he was, the Hero was no match for so

many men.

As the Hero resigned himself to death, surrounded on all sides by bandits, a figure appeared from the surrounding woods. The figure had once been a great knight.

And still is.

I am going to ignore you.

The Hero looked in awe as the old knight dispatched the bandits without a drop of sweat appearing on his brow. The Hero fell upon the ground at the feet of his savior and told the old knight of his plight.

Quest. And to complete the quest, I need training. Plight paints me as a spoiled prince.

Fine, quest.

The old knight, touched by the Hero's humility, agreed to train him in the art of the sword. The Hero spent many months training with the grave old knight, who proved to be a good teacher. As the winter faded into spring, the Hero grew in his abilities and learned many things besides the art of the sword. The two became fast friends, and completed several other quests together. Sadly, all good things must end, and so must these good days. The Hero left teacher, and dear friend, as the spring warmed to summer and set off for the black tower at the top of the mountain high above the plains of the castle. He left before the breaking of dawn.

Again, Narrator?

Of course, aren't you eager to go out and rescue your princess.

Yes, Narrator, I am earnest in my quest. But, not to save a princess.

You are not going to save the princess?

No, you misunderstand. I am going to save the princess. But, I am eager to save a girl whose parents and friends have all abandoned her.

I see. When did you-when did she become more than a princess to you?

It is something that the old knight said when I told him my story. If a poor son of a stable man can go on a quest like a prince, then a princess can have the heart that can be broken.

The old knight was wise.

He was, is, a good man.

And you wiser for knowing him?

I can only hope, dear Narrator. I will need any wisdom I have gained to save the princess.

So, will you leave before dawn?

Yes, Before the crack of dawn it will be. But, I get to stop for breakfast.

Deal.

As the Hero walked on the road, enjoying a sweet roll from a town he had passed through, he came to a crossroad. To the left was a road heading into a deep woods, which ended at the foot of the mountains where the Evil Wizard lived in his dark

tower high above the plains of the castle. To the right was a single sign advertising a fortune teller. The Hero turned to the right, and walked down the road.

Are you sure this is necessary? I could be at the mountain in only three more days if I went to the left. The princess has already been imprisoned for so long.

You may do as you wish, Hero.

I know.

Then, why do you still go to the right?

I trust you, Narrator. If you wish for me to go to the right, and meet this fortune teller, then I will go to the right. I have been questing for months, a couple extra days will make no difference.

Why do you trust me, Hero?

You gave me a quest, a purpose, and led me to the old knight. I have you to owe for all the things I have learned from him.

You will not regret going to the fortune teller, Hero.

Then I will go.

The Hero traveled a whole day to reach the home of the fortune teller, who had hidden herself away deep inside a community of gnomes. He spent another three days in the caverns searching for the mystic. She was herself part gnome, and preferred the twisting underground cities of her mother's kin than the village her father had raised

her in. She had outlived both beloved parents by at least fifty years.

The Hero bowed before her reverently, and asked humbly for her guidance in his quest. She, struck by his humbleness and his courage to face the Evil Wizard despite his parentage, told him his fortune; that he would return the princess safely home. To aid him in his quest, the old gnome gave the Hero the Belt of Truth.

Do you know what it does?

Yes.

... So, what does it do?

I don't have to tell you anything. Maybe you should ask the fortune teller.

With all due respect, she is so old and blind that she can barely tell what is edible. She has tried to eat a rock, twice. Oh, by the gods-

What?

She wants me to eat one.

A rock?

I may offend her if I do not.

You can't eat a rock to avoid offending a gnome. Please, tell me you didn't.

I set it on the ground. Luckily, she cannot tell one rock from another.

You wouldn't have actually eaten it, right?

If I answer your question, will you answer mine?

You won't be getting anything from me, I just

tell the story.

Then I will discover it on my own, tricky Narrator.

As the Hero strapped the belt around his waist, the wise old gnome told him of two more items he would need to complete his quest.

First, was the Hero's Sword. The sword was made by goblins, its white steel would never rust and it could cut through any enchantment. The Hero's Sword could be found in a nearby cavern, deeper in the gnomes' dwelling, guarded by a dragon. The Hero only had to kill the beast to gain his sword.

I have to kill the dragon to gain a sword, wonderful.

At least you have the Belt of Truth.

I am not sure how I am going to be able to defeat the dragon with a Belt of Truth, especially if you will not tell me what it does.

I don't actually know what it does...

Truly?

I'm sorry. I was hoping the fortune teller would say. We'll work on it together.

Do you know anything about the story Narrator?

Just listen to the gnome, Hero, she's still talking.

Second was a fine necklace, which would teleport the princess to safety after the Hero had

freed her from her prison and broken the enchantment. It was deeper than even the dragon's cavern, in an ancient place. The Hero would have to pass a mysterious test to gain the necklace that would ensure the princess' safety.

She will not tell me what the test is.

It's supposed to be mysterious. You can't know what the test is yet.

Maybe the dragon will know. We could have a nice chat before I run him through with the sword I do not have.

Perhaps. But, you aren't supposed to be funny, Hero.

And did you decide as such, dear Narrator?

No, it just the way fairy tales are told. The Hero is supposed to be brave, charismatic, and strong; but never funny.

Would you like me to stop being funny?

I never said that, necessarily.

The Hero thanked the fortune teller profusely for her wisdom, and began walking down the tunnel toward his fate. Soon, the temperature began to rise, for he was drawing near to the dragon's cavern. With bravery in his heart, and love lending strength to his steps, the Hero seized his chosen road.

I like your laugh, Narrator. It reminds me of the sunshine in this dark situation.

You will reach the dragon soon, Hero. My

laugh will not help you defeat the beast.

Maybe not.

Certainly not. What are you going to do?

Hope. And, listen.

The sword must be in the cavern with the dragon.

If I can distract it long enough... Maybe I could find the sword before it eats me.

And, how will you distract the dragon?

With my insufferable charm and good looks.

Maybe something a little more reliable?

What if you spoke to it? Surely, even a dragon would be surprised and intrigued by such a laugh in its head.

I cannot speak to anyone else.

I must be special.

You are the Hero.

I am... I must defeat this dragon, Narrator. The princess needs someone to save her, and no one else will come after me.

I understand, Hero. Have you considered your belt yet?

What about the belt? Wait, are you suggesting a weapon?

How long is it?

It wraps three times around my waist. Why?

You are near the dragon. Pay attention, and use the belt.

The belt, of course. Why else would the for-

tune teller have given it to me, if not for defeating the dragon. I should have seen it earlier.

Hero?

Yes?

Are you afraid?

Heroes are not supposed to be afraid. Still, my heart pounds against the inside of my chest like a hundred horses' hooves... And you, Narrator, are you afraid?

I am the Narrator.

So, you are afraid too. A terrible twist of fate is it not? The Hero and the Narrator, the two people who are never to feel fear are afraid. I realize now that this quest may have been doomed from its inception.

Heroes are also not supposed to be funny... or kind.

What are you saying?

Heroes are also supposed to be princes and knights. But, you are different. And you have made it so far already, we cannot give up now.

Do you speak truthfully? ... Do you really believe that I have something they do not?

Yes, we may not be strong like the others, but at least we are working together.

We have come to an agreement...

I believe that you will defeat the dragon.

Then, I am not afraid.

The Hero held tight to the words he had heard

and peeked around one last twist in the passage to catch his first glimpse of the beast. The Dragon's skin was sickly green, and its eyes fogged over from many years spent in the depths of the cavern. Over a thousand years ago the Dragon had secreted itself away with his treasure deep into the earth in an effort to escape the light. The beast had become so evil that the sun's rays burned it to its very being. In all that time, the evil inside had been nourished by the dark.

The beast raised its terrible head as the Hero's entered his chamber. The Hero approached the Dragon without fear. It laughed at him, and his brazen folly. For, who dared to approach a dragon as old as he without armor or even a weapon? Who would treat his life so cheaply?

But, the Hero had a plan. His words rang true around the dank cavern, glittering with jewels and gold coins in a layer knee deep like snow, telling the dragon a story. His own story. The Dragon was captivated by the Hero's words and did not see the Hero wind three times from around his waist the Belt of Truth.

Just as the Hero admitted that he had sought out the dragon for the Hero's Sword, he sprang nimbly upon the Dragon's back; swift because he was not burdened by armor or sword. He wrapped the Belt of Truth around the beast's neck and gripped it tightly.

The dragon laughed again, not understanding the peril it was in. The Hero, discerning the true nature of the Belt, asked the Dragon if it would allow him to walk free with the sword if he pulled the Belt from its neck. The Dragon agreed, but in its evil heart it knew that it would burn the Hero the moment he leapt from its scaly back.

As this thought blackened the Dragon's heart, the Belt shone with the light of the sun. The Dragon fell to the floor of its cavern, as lifeless and blackened as its own heart had been. The Hero rejoiced, and all the good forces rejoiced, for a great evil had been vanquished.

After searching for a time, the Hero found the Hero's Sword hidden deep in the Dragon's hoard next to a golden set of armor. The Hero abstained from the heavy gold plate, knowing that the lack of such finery had made his victory over the dragon possible. Instead, He sheathed his new weapon onto the Belt of Truth.

We did it!

Yes we did, dear Hero! Yes we did.

I can see a door, further into the Dragon's Hoard. I would be willing to bet that is where the necklace is.

Shouldn't we wait a moment? We don't even know what the test is.

Which is exactly why we do not have to wait. We know nothing, so why hesitate? The princess

has been alone for months, she must think no one is coming for her.

Of course, you're right. Let's go.

The Hero approached the door to the Test which would win him the necklace to save the princess. Upon the reaching the door, he opened it without ceremony and stepped inside. The room itself was paved in white marble and radiated with a light of its own. The door had been well covered, as the Dragon had despised the room that had interrupted its black asylum. The Belt of Truth shone, so that it and the Hero were alight with righteous clarity.

Without his knowledge, the Hero stood just outside a terrible enchantment with his feet upon the threshold. At the last moment, the Hero detected a shimmer in the air before him, and unsheathed his sword.

With a mighty slash, the Hero cut away the enchantments that impeded his progress. The magic fell to the floor in tattered silver shreds, now completely harmless.

In the Hero's mind, all danger had been dealt with. Unbeknownst to him, one last test remained. This final enchantment tested the very heart of the Hero, and found him worthy of the pendant without the Hero ever realizing he had been tested.

The Hero took his prize, a red pendant on a fine silver chain, and thanked once again the wise

old fortune teller for her help and wisdom. With his sword secured, and the necklace safe inside a secret pouch around his neck, the Hero departed from the hideous cavern and turned his eyes towards the surface and the sun again.

I was in the caves for a week, between looking for the fortune teller and finding the dragon.

I know, and I am so sorry.

The Hero walked all day with his prizes in hand, heading for the mountain upon which the Evil Wizard had placed his dark tower. Before the sun set again, he could see the mountain.

It is like being born anew, the sun once again touching my cheek. I have decided that your voice is like the wind that whispers across the land of the living, bringing with it wisdom and sweet tastes of other places.

How long have you been working on that one?

As long as I have been yearning to smell fresh air again.

Well, it was beautiful.

Thank you, Narrator.

Perhaps you should save such sweet words for your princess.

Perhaps. But, you should know, I do not know her.

Not at all?

No.

Then why come on this quest at all?

Her own father was not going to save her. She had no one. I could not stand by, unmoved, and let her fall to some cruel fate at the hands of an Evil Wizard. And, look at all I have gained since I started this whole adventure. I have learned the art of the sword, I have visited one of the greatest gnomish cities, I have defeated a dragon with nothing but the Belt... I have met you.

Why are you silent, Narrator?

I fear I have made a mistake.

A mistake? Surely not.

This story was supposed to be tragic. Instead, it has hammered and shaped a boy into...

Into?

A true Hero.

... Your words mean more to me than a Dragon's horde.

I only spoke the truth. You are becoming a Hero, one that rescues princesses he doesn't know... and eats rocks to keep from offending old gnomes.

Nonsense! You know I did not eat the rock.

Yeah, but you would've.

Perhaps, but, do not claim your own virtues as nothing. It was you who started all this, who led me to the fortune teller, who told me how to use the Belt. Your kind words that have encouraged my steps. I could not have done any of this without you.

Thank you, Hero. I do not know what to... I am glad that I have met you.

And I you, dear Narrator... Narrator?

Yes, Hero?

When I rescue the princess, will the story be over? Will you go back to whatever mysterious land you came from?

I don't know.

The Hero walked many more days before he reached the base of the mountain. And, three more before he scaled the rocky cliffs. He met many servants of the Evil Wizard along the way, but vanquished them all with the Hero's Sword and his Belt of Truth. The necklace stayed in a pouch around his neck, close to his heart. When the Hero began to falter, and wondered why he faced so many hardships, he would pull out the red pendant with the fine silver chain and remember the young princess whose own father did not love her enough to rescue her; and, he would find the strength to continue.

After a long journey, with many trials and sufferings, the Hero arrived at the Evil Wizard's dark tower high above the plains of the castle.

After all this time, I was beginning to wonder if this place even existed.

Me too. Go inside, Hero, and save your princess.

Before I go, will you tell me your name?

No, Hero. I cannot. Soon, you will have your princess and you will forget that I have ever spoken to you.

Never. I will know your name, Narrator, before this story is over.

The Hero, with a great weight on his heart, stepped into the tower and began to climb the hundred stairs that would lead him to the top; where the Evil Wizard awaited him with the princess.

After cresting the last step, the Hero saw his princess imprisoned in a birdcage at the far end of the room. She was once again a girl. The Hero greeted her quietly, and ran to her aid. Although she did not recognize him, the princess took his every word as truth; for the Belt was working in her heart. He clasped her hands gently, then thrust toward her the red pendant on the fine silver chain and urged her to put it around her neck. Just as the princess laid the precious necklace around her white neck, a terrible laugh split the room.

The princess had still gone nowhere. The Hero had made a deadly mistake. He had not freed the princess first from the cage that imprisoned her.

The Evil Wizard had watched the Hero climb the tower. When the pendant had not worked, as he had known, the Evil Wizard had triumphed in his dark heart and appeared from the shadows to defeat the Hero.

The Hero turned to face the Evil Wizard, the two

of them commenced a battle that lasted through the night. It was the darkest night the mountain had ever seen, brought on by the Evil Wizard's magic, lit only by the light of the Hero. The Hero shone like a second sun, his Belt of Truth and Hero's Sword giving him the strength to fight for many hours. But, it was his heart that enabled him to face the Evil Wizard, around whom the very air was sour; for, the Hero's heart was full with compassion. Nothing could stop a heart so virtuous.

Just as dawn was striking the sides of the dark tower, the Hero dealt the Evil Wizard a killing blow. The Evil Wizard fell, clutching at the terrible wound in his chest. Where his heart should have been was only a hairy black mass, a sickened heart long dead. Even while dying, the Evil Wizard struggled for more diabolic sorcery to throw at the Hero, but was unable to speak.

Satisfied that the Evil Wizard was vanquished, the Hero turned his back on his foe. With a mighty swing, the Hero cleaved the gilded prison in two. The mangled pieces blackened then turned to dust at the princess' feet. She graced the Hero with the most beautiful and jubilant of smiles before vanishing, the red pendant having taken her safely back to her home.

At this moment, the Hero, with his most noble quest completed, shone just as his Belt and Sword did; with an inner light to rival the sun itself. He was

still the lowly son of a stable man and a noblewoman's sixth lady in waiting; they still loved him more with each sunrise, and he them. But, He had become the Hero.

Narrator, can you believe this? I have completed my quest. I have saved her.

Yes, Hero, I can believe it.

And, even better still, I can-

The Evil Wizard had pulled from inside his robes a dagger and had used its black blade to return his wounds in kind to the Hero. His revenge made, the Evil Wizard fell down as his heart beat its last triumphant beat at hurting another human.

The Hero's light began to fade. He sank to the ground, succumbing even more by the moment to his terrible wound. But, he was content for he had saved the princess. Actually, the Hero was content in all but one thing. He began his last breaths with a single wish in his heart that he knew could never be fulfilled. The Hero bravely resigned himself to-

And that was when I broke the most important rule.

I fell to my knees onto the cold stone of the tower. It smelled like acrid herbs, charred cloth, and blood. The stench stung my nose and eyes. That was certainly why tears ran down my cheeks. Cold air and snow blew in from all sides. Black blood ran in rivulets down the stones from the body of a frail old man whose stiff body was nearly swallowed whole

in a voluminous pitch robe. I shied away from the liquid, the very sight chilled my bones more than the snow on my cheeks.

Red blood flowed from an altogether different man. I rushed to his side.

This man wore no armor, and his body was still warm despite the black hilt of an evil blade embedded in his stomach. His face was deathly pale, and only made more so by messy brown hair. I pulled him into my arms, and could feel his chest moving. He breathed like a real man. Around his waist was a simple belt made of white braided metal. On the ground beside his right hand was a simple sword, its blade also made from white steel.

"Deina!" I said, shouting above the wind and shaking my head. "My name is Deina."

"Deina." The voice may have once been strong, but was now reduced to a whisper.

The air died around us as another wicked spell ran its course. His mouth had moved as he had spoken, just like a real man. His eyes opened, and the edges crinkled in a smile. They were the most lively green eyes I had ever seen. Even the specks of brown in them seemed alight with the smile.

"Your name is Deina?" He asked in a daze.

"Yes, yes it is." I gripped him tighter.

"I nev-never knew anything could be so sweet." He shook his head then allowed it drop again into my arms. "I told you... I told you I would

know your name before the story was over.”

His eyes had closed again, but his mouth was still turned up in a rather self-satisfied grin. I loved every second that he moved and breathed, loved his smile, proving that he was in fact real. That I had, in fact, not broken the highest rule for an imaginary man, the simple Hero of a simple book.

“I remember.” I said. “And your name?”

“Arete.” He answered.

“Arete.” I repeated quietly.

“I am sure that I hallucinate; but thank you, Deina, for coming to tell me your name... and for coming to say goodbye.” He sighed. “I can go on to the next life completely content.”

“Oh, no you won't.” I said with fervor.

There was a fire in my chest. Arete was a living breathing person, not a placeholder in a book. He was more than a Hero in a simple fairy tale, he had a name. He had fought and won a quest for a princess he hadn't even known. I strapped the Hero's Sword to Arete's belt.

“We've only just met. You can't leave, not now, get up.”

“Get up?” He asked, his eyes opening incredulously. “My lifeblood stains the stones beneath me, and you want me to get up?”

“I came to tell you my name, Arete, not to say goodbye.”

“Of course you didn't.” He sighed, but

gripped my hand harder.

“We have to get out of here, I’ll help you.”

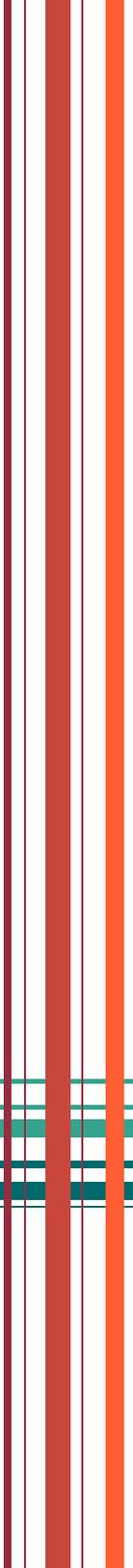
Arete nodded. “Where are we going?”

“Home.” I answered simply.

I pulled his arm around my shoulders and prepared to heave both of us to our feet. Already my fingers and toes were going numb, my teeth chattered and I couldn’t smell anymore. Still my heart was seized by fear and my resolve wavered; after what I had done, maybe it would be better to stay inside the book after all. Arete gasped at my side as I pulled us to our feet. The decision was made for me... I would do anything to help him.

“Everything is going to be fine. But, when we pass through that gate I am going to be in so much trouble.”

To Be Continued...



Hallow's Way by Peter Macolino

I woke up that morning with a transcendent sense of peace. I simply was, and that was good enough. I sat at a bus stop, worn down by eons of age and dulled by weather. All around me was a familiar city that I could not place, completely deserted and gray. My hands rested gently on my lap. I was dressed in an expensive three piece suit, the kind you see on TV that cost \$600 on sale. Two black dress shoes with perfect bow knots in the laces. My fingers didn't move at all as I waited. I was still, simple and purely patient.

As I waited, I watched the sunset. It spread out tendrils of purple and green and bright red in patterns that defied logical thinking. I didn't mind. The colors shifted in time like a kaleidoscope, twirling and dancing in the sky. The colors reminded me of a painter's pallet, midway through a masterpiece.

Through the still tempest of color a shape emerged, followed quickly by the steady clapping of iron horseshoes. A pair of ebony steeds morphed from the shadows between the living colors, walking with long, even strides. On the flanks and backs of the stallions were silver and red velvet, with ornate curling designs. As the two beasts strode forward

out of the shadows behind them melded a cloud-veil carriage. It had a broad sloping frame, a dozen and a half feet tall and twice as long. Six wheels each as tall as I was rolled in perfect tandem over the flawless concrete street. Steering the carriage was a man shrouded in a long overcoat and white gloves. A broad-brim fedora covered his face as he held the reins with easy confidence, the kind of confidence that comes with experience.

The carriage pulled up to the bus stop, and an aura of calm settled over me as a bit of the bus stop sign rusted and fell to the ground. The door on the carriage side opened, and I stood, dusted off my jacket, and stepped inside.

The seats were of the same red velvet as the halters. The walls curved up so that they melded into the ceiling with no clear corner. As I sat down on the bright crimson seat the door closed, and I heard the horses snort and the crack of the reins, and the mobile room shuddered into motion.

Two figures occupied the carriage with me. The first sat beside me. His face was muzzled, and his arms were tied into a straight jacket. I saw even his feet were bound to each other with a thick chain and that chain welded into a large iron spherical weight. His eyes wandered with fervent intensity, seeming to latch onto no particular thing. Beneath the muzzle his mouth babbled incessantly, never stopping nor ceding to reason.

The other was a calm man in an utterly dark suit, counterbalancing his roseless cheeks. His hollowed eyes were quiet, peaceful, and kind, and gazed out the window opposite mine with perfect attention. He was thin, clean-shaven, and had a sharp jawline. One hand held his chin up with simple grace, the other was folded on his lap. Though his features were young, his skin was wrinkled and leathery.

After a few minutes of dormant silence the pale man turned and smiled at me. It was a sad, worn smile. "Welcome," he said. His voice was like the sound of a wind through trees, quiet, ever present, and a force of nature.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am your guide," the man said. "I will show you the way to your new home." He turned back to look out the window. "It is a lovely view from here."

I gently rotated my neck, my eyes searching the scenery. A young boy, in shorts and a baseball jersey, walking hand in hand with an older man. The youth had curly brown hair, masked by a Yankee's baseball cap. Under his free arm was a little baseball mitt. Inside the glove, at the thumb, would be written in pen, "Rivera Jr."

"Do you like baseball?" asked my guide, his eyes lost in the scene.

"I don't know," I answered, turning to him. His face betrayed no emotion as he analyzed the boy.

When I looked back out the window the boy and adult were gone, and in their place was a forest, green and lush with life. Sitting on a big rock is an older boy, well into his teens but not quite a man yet. The curly brown hair has given way to short hair bulging in the front with close cuts fading at his sides. Natural athleticism oozes from his pores, and his body is well proportioned. He wears a baseball jersey, designed with a huge number 42.

Next to him is a broader specimen, with unnatural green hair and a body riveted with piercings. This fellow leans against the rock casually, talking.

I blinked, and suddenly the green haired boy was gone. Discarded next to the brown-haired boy is the same jersey, the 42 worn down to just a 4. On top of him is a young woman, with long, lush blonde hair pulled back to flow down her bare back. It is hard to tell where the boy ends and the girl begins.

“Who is that woman?” I asked, curious.

“I do not know,” the man answered. “Her time is not yet here.” The scene vanished before me, and all was dark outside the window. “Do you know where you are?”

“No,” I answered, looking at the man.

He smiled, and sighed. “I expected as much. Only one man ever knew where he was. Do you know where you are going?”

“No.”

"The journey of life is full of potholes and twists and turns," he said, leaning back. "This journey has only one crossroad, yet mortals find my carriage ride more deceptive than any other quest they endeavor to take."

"You are not mortal?"

The man beside me screamed in agony. I glanced at him as he writhed in his bondage, twisted and blasting profanities. The jacket tightened and stretched as he heaved to break free. The iron ball at his feet didn't shift in the slightest as the youthful person, foaming at the mouth, kicked in every direction.

"What is wrong with him?" I asked, in complete calm.

"Wrong?" the man across from me asked, almost amused. "Nothing is wrong. In fact, he is exactly what he was meant to be. He is realized."

"Then why does he act insane?"

A brutal roar burst from the muzzle, and the man redoubled his efforts. "It is only insanity from this side." said my pale faced guide. "The world covets this man. They believe that this man is the sole holder to the answer to life's many imperfections. Does that mean they covet insanity?"

"I don't know."

He gazed for a second at me, his empty, black eyes seeming to read my thoughts. Then he nodded. "Look outside. Perhaps you know this

scene.”

I glanced out the window to see the inside of a church. The brown haired teen is a man now, with hair combed back and a glossy black suit on. He stands with a prophetic grin next to a man dressed in a similar, if less flashy, suit and holding a bible. On his other side are three other men, none of them with the telltale green hair or body rivets.

In front of them the pews are full of people, all in complete silence, heads turned to look down the aisle. The object of their attention is a woman in a shimmering white dress that seems to shift between dimensions as she walks. Her head is covered with a veil and she walks with cool, purposeful strides.

I watch as the two figures face each other, and words are exchanged. Time seems fluid as the ceremony runs by almost in an instant. I see the exchange of rings and of promises, and the veil lifted from the woman's face. She, also, is not the blond haired woman from before, rather of shoulder length black hair and sturdy features.

“Marriage,” the man said wistfully. “The sacred bonding of two imperfect entities into one. A memorable event, wouldn't you say?”

“I don't know.”

“Indeed,” he answered.

“Were those two happy together?”

“See for yourself.”

They are at the beach, walking together,

hand in hand. They are still young.

They are in a kitchen, screaming at each other. The man lifts up a knife and raises it threateningly with wrinkled hands.

The man stumbled from the dark exterior through the door and collapses onto a chair, exhaustion decades too old for his year stapled to his face.

The woman is on the phone, angry. She brushes a few grey strands away from a bruised cheek.

The man answers the door, and a familiar blond head of hair steps into the house and out of her robe.

The woman stands outside, staring up at the twisting shadows of two figures in her bedroom.

The man is outside the house. In one hand is a cane, in the other luggage. In the doorway is the woman, her face emotionless and her arms crossed. The man says something, one last thing, then turns to leave. The woman stalks back into the house and the door shuts.

The carriage shook from the reverberation of the boom. I had to grip the window sill to keep from falling. "What was that?" I asked.

"The man," my guide says simply. "He shut his heart. Such a devastation can be felt no matter where you are."

"What did he say?"

"I'm sorry for what I did," a hard, gravelly

voice cut through, suddenly surrounding me in a sonic capsule. "But you didn't need to be a heartless fucking bitch about it. Enjoy the rest of your life, you pretentious fucking whore."

"I don't understand," I said. "The man was at fault."

"This view is the clearest view a man can have. To say now you don't understand is the way it should be."

"And this man does not have the same clear view?"

"Life is a lens. If you do not take care of it, it will become blurry and dirty. This man you see looked at life through a lens of questionable clarity." He gestured to the window. "There is more."

The man is sitting in the stands. His hair is mostly grey now, with only a few brown hairs. He is scowling at the baseball game going on below, seemingly unaware of the fact that the team wearing the jerseys that match his, still marked with the faded 4, are winning by six. He taps his cane angrily against the adjacent seat, until finally he stands, with an angry exposition, and stalks away.

I see him walk through the crowds, down the stairs of the stadium, out the exit, and into the streets. He walks with mad efficiency, every step striking the ground like mallets on a drum. His eyes are straight ahead, seeming to ignore the masses that pass on either side of him.

A shoulder bumps him, followed by a quick apology. But the man spins around and spews a torrent of fiery insults at the woman, seeming to force her back with the power of his words until she trips on a loose brick and falls over. Still fuming, the man turns and steps into the street.

The sight outside shifts, and all I see is a bright light, then a blaring horn, then the vision is gone. "What happened," I ask.

"I'm afraid you don't know," my guide answered in full clairvoyance.

Outside we passed by a the familiar dull grey city again, devoid of color. The streets hung dull, rusted and falling apart, along dusty and cracked sidewalks, by closed windows on towering skyscrapers. The tall buildings so close made it seem like a tunnel.

Then we were out, immediately over a long and endless field of dancing wheat.

"What was that city?" I asked.

"The city is simply a container," the man said. "Though you have never seen this side, you know it well. It was originally to be the Destination, but the Choice of Mortal Life divined a different use. Now it holds the decision of men."

"What choices were made?"

"Not choices, Choice."

"What is this field, then?"

"It is simple Between. This place is perfectly

untouched by the lives of men, has always been, and will always be. It is guided by the natural order of the Way of Life."

"But it is all in neat rows."

"Time changes all things, even the natural order of the Way of Life. Before Time changed its whims, order was the natural order of the Way of Life in the mortals' realm. Time is more powerful than him," he pointed to the chained and muzzled man, "or even me."

"Is Time the most powerful?"

"No."

"Can you tell me more about the muzzled man?" Almost as if he knew I spoke of him, the near human beside me twisted and moaned, attempting to break free of his bindings.

"What do you desire to know?"

"Why is he here with you?"

"I am his counterpart," was the answer. "And because of the realized state he is in I am also his keeper."

"Was he not always in this state?"

"No," he answered. "Long ago, before I walked your earth freely, he was the guide of this carriage and of this journey."

"What happened?"

"Mortality."

A soul rending screech tore out of the man's throat as he bucked wildly. He thrashed his neck

in such a frenzy I thought he would snap his spine, but I heard no crack. I realized the importance of the metal ball holding him down, now, as he strove to fly about the carriage in full insanity. After what seemed an eternity, he fell back, breathless but muttering nonetheless.

“We are passing the gateway now,” my guide said evenly to me, unphased by the outburst.

I glanced out the window to see a glimmering veil of colors that twisted and danced before me. The horses, jet flanks and snow teeth, entered the veil and vanished behind the pallet of vibrancy. I watched as first the driver with his face obscured, and then the carriage itself, melded into the color.

Beyond, was a bright nothing. We seemed to float in ether, horses still clopping along in their steady staccato, but now with no ground to strike. All around us, from not specific source, light emanated throughout the space.

Suddenly, a mighty giant, a hundred feet tall and growing by the instant, stepped from nothing right in front of me. His flesh swirled with purple and yellow and red, his hair thick and braided mist, and two silver globes for eyes. With heavy but swift steps, he stepped towards the veil I had passed, and reached out his hands to place gently against the now solid mass.

“Who is that giant?”

“He is the Mark of Temporal Termination,” my

guide answered. "He is the Watch-Guard, and the Eternal Lullaby."

I saw the great giant press forward into the veil, groaning with the effort, and brace himself against the empty ground. The lights of the veil began to retract, sucked into the palms of his hand.

"What is he doing?"

"He sets the sun of a mortal." In his struggle, the veil darkened slowly, the light dying away at the titan's command. Each strand of color vanished into his flesh, pulsing like veins. First purple, then yellow vanished, then red was obliterated. Then, finally, with a blink of my eye-

Deep darkness.

"What has happened now?" I asked.

For the first time, I received no answer.

I stepped forward, realizing suddenly I was no longer in the dark and homely carriage. My dress shoes clicked unnaturally as I walked, echoing like I was in a large hall. Finally, ahead, I saw a light. I strode towards it, covering the ground half a mile per step, until I stood before a redwood door with a single street lamp, filled with a flickering candle, hanging from the frame above. I reached for the handle, and opened the door.

I stood in a long hallway, nothing beneath my feet, nothing above my head, but red velvet walls on either side. Down the length of the hallway, I saw a figure, standing as I stood, too far to

be seen in detail.

"Here, mortal, is where I leave you," said the voice of my guide in my ear. I stepped forward, eager to learn the identity of the man ahead. The figure started towards me.

"What do I do now?" I asked.

"Now, you continue," said the voice. "You are mortal, and a subject of Time, so you must continue forward." I could see, ahead, the man closing in on me. The hallway seemed endless, its soft red walls comforting.

"What will happen next?"

"You will go to the New Destination, which one I do not know." I glanced below me, and saw miles below a black ground, bare of anything but dead trees and withered grass. Unmistakably, I saw the soft uprise of a hill, topped with a gaping hole from which smoke poured.

"What are the New Destinations?"

"Up, and Down." I looked up, and saw a floating city high above the clouds. The clouds themselves formed great marble walls that circled the metropolis, guarded with soldiers in silver mail and white banners. The only way in was a gateway etched in gold and smote from pure light.

"Will I choose which one I go to?" I stopped finally, and looked at the figure.

He was old, with luscious grey hair slicked back to reveal a face set in a perpetual grimace. In

his right hand is a cane topped with a swan's head. He wears a three piece suit, perfectly matching in his form and figure. It flickers, and I feel the scratch of a baseball jersey against my chest for the briefest of moments. We gasp.

“You already have.”

I grip my cane, and I fall, down, down, down into the smoke.

Captain Crepe and the Golden Treasure

by Raymond Hanus

A good many tales I've told over the years,
Of monsters defeated and confronted fears.
Some songs I have sung have even been true!
Of such is the one I shall relate to you.
But before I begin, a brief introduction:
I'm Captain Crepe, the man with much gumption
Who sailed the seas from the east to the west
Of all pirate captains I'm surely the best.
But enough of all this, let me begin my tale,
(But I ask that you won't interrupt with a wail).
My great saga begins: Once, on the ocean blue,
I was searching for a ship for me to subdue
With my famous and fearsome vessel Brown Bagel
When I spotted a galley and thought I was able
To plunder the monsters and capture their treasure.
To gain some more gold would be a great pleasure.
So I raised up the sails and captured the breeze,
The good ship Brown Bagel soared across the seas,
However, the small galley that I had spotted
Saw my approach, so its captain plotted,
To turn the tables and give me a surprise.
But no part of this plan did I surmise.
I lashed Brown Bagel to the side of the boat,
And jumped on the deck with a roar in my throat,
"Ahoy, me hearties, my name's Captain Crepe!
And I have to say, you're not in good shape.
You'd best hand to me all of your gold.

Hurry up, ye scoundrels, we're all growing old!"
But my threat was rudely interrupted
When from a thick barrel a goblin erupted,
And wacked a frying pan against my head.
I'm sure I collapsed, so he left me for dead.
I was back on Brown Bagel when I opened my eyes,
A thought came to my head, so with curses and cries
I dashed swift as I could to my cargo hold,
But the goblin had taken my chest of gold!
My face turned to red and steam flew out my ears.
I had never been plundered in all of my years!
So I dashed to the tiller and pulled it around,
From this disaster I resolved to rebound!
On the distant horizon I spotted the galley
"Har Har!" I laughed, "They're in for it badly!
Never underestimate captains like Crepe,
They failed by leaving Brown Bagel shipshape!"
I caught the wind in the sails and flew in pursuit,
My chance of success was hardly minute.
But the situation was certainly not growing nicer,
For the goblin had docked his ship at an iceberg!
I moored Brown Bagel alongside the craft,
And with a mighty leap, grabbed onto a shaft
Of ice that was sticking out over the sea.
But a pirate's good fortune had abandoned me.
From the top of the cliff, a goblin looked down,
With gleaming red eyes and his face in a frown.
On top of his head was a magnificent hat
(but not fancy as mine; I can tell you that)
Which depicted a crossbones cast into bronze.
I knew things were bad—he could best me with tongs,
Since my hands' sole support was a spire of ice.

So I thought, instead of threats, I would be nice.
I called, "My good goblin, why are you tarrying
At a lonely iceberg—are you perhaps burying
The treasure that you cunningly stole from me?"

I can assure you that I did not see
Your clever hiding place in the barrel,
All your foes in your presence are surely in peril!
But tell me, did you make this plan with your crew,
Or do you work alone, was it only you?"

The goblin grinned at my flattery
"To tell the truth, it was all my mastery
That thought to conceal myself in a cask,
I have no crew, but why do you ask?"

Thinking quickly, I decided to stall.
"My good sea monster, I wanted to tell all
Who I meet of the goblin who will win great fame,
But tell me, good sir, just what is your name?"

The mail-clad goblin stood proud and straight,
"Captain Ironclad am I, I'm no first mate!
I am in charge of my own vessel,

But will you really to all folk my story tell?"
"But of course," I replied, "you deserve this great honor,
You're the fiercest goblin on the whole water!
I would love to write a book of your recent exploit,
So that all may know that you're very adroit!"

The eyes of the goblin lit up with glee.
"Truly, you would do all this for me!"
I replied, "But of course, if you'd throw me a rope"
For I was beginning to let go of the grope
That my hands had on the icy spike.
The goblin complied just as fast as I'd like.
He pulled me up onto the top of the cliff,

I thought of attack, but my hands were still stiff.

Captain Ironclad looked at me with delight.

“In the book you write of me, will you raise my height?”

At this point I noticed my chest on the ground,
And decided this goblin I’d completely confound.

“Alas,” I replied, “I would love to comply,
But the price of paper is extremely high.

To publish a book I shall need some more gold
Are you willing to fund me, ere your story is told?”

“But of course!” he replied, with his face lit with passion
So he gave me my own treasure back in fine fashion.

With a wave of farewell, I climbed back on my craft
And sailed off fast as a blustery draft.

I know I shall always recall the day
That I tricked a goblin into giving me pay
For writing a book (I’m illiterate, in fact).
When against me all the odds were stacked.

Many a tale I could tell of the sea,
But I’m done for now, so good night to ye.

Half Heat

by Katy Humnick

Triblue Planet, Sunrise 17 after The Event. Survivor of the Sterlyn Malacostra.

Remembering, I only see it in bright lightning flashes—everything illuminated in extreme intensity, angular and full, then nothing except the oppressive blankness. Images moving from one stark position to another, no sense of transition, no assurance that the scenes followed one after the other.

A bright orange, like the inside of a pumpkin, entering my throat, beating at my hands, filling my vision. They say there can be no explosions in space, no fire, no red. But they do not tell you about this savage heat which takes on a color and substance so real that there is no doubt but that it will swallow you whole, consuming you like the candlewick of an interstellar jack 'o lantern. I can see where the ship bears a resemblance to the carved out eye-holes of such a thing. I see the lines of fracture so clearly that I believe for a moment I am fractured too, split down the middle, held tentatively together by the pressing orange weight. I believe this only for the moments I can see the orange, before it be-

gins to waver and excite everything around it so that nothing is solid, so that I seem to see atoms leaping across the deck, so that I feel my splitting wanting to happen in every direction rather than in half. I believe this only for the moments I can see, but then the flash is gone and I receive only whiteness.

The uniforms, universally silver, and a rainbow light effect bouncing to my eyes from their reflective surfaces. I count four. I see in full relief the embroidered patches of fractal patterns signifying what ship we are to pilot. Each is detailed down to the sixth similtude of the Sierpinski hexagon stitched on the right shoulder. It is small and neat and present on every person's sleeve. I feel cool air against my face drying out my eyes as I watch. The air is sterile and scentless. The uniform wearers stand in a line in front of me. I cannot see these persons' faces nor remember who they are meant to be. There is only the line of silver, silver like the starship's impenetrable shell, silver like the ring on the outstretched ungloved hand belonging to the third uniform in line. I believe I should know the hand better than my own, but this flash ends and the bolt of memory quickens into the empty space with haste.

The buttons flashing erratically. They are green and they are yellow and they are all over and not

meant to be all over, they look like they are moving and they are not meant to be moving. The sound of creaking floorboards seems to come from them and makes me clench my teeth together. From the platform behind this flashing-light-filled, wavering door of the QTransport, I see steely walls bulging like the paint on a water-filled ceiling, ready to burst. I see foreign stars outside through the warped window which seems to be pulling into a ball, magnifying the light of those stars that are so yellow like the lights that are flashing so much. A new sound like skating across black ice begins to twang and stretch all around me. I have just enough time to worry about eleven of the thousand malfunctions that could be occurring with the QTransport before I get nothing but whiteness.

A purple line of interruption across the Malacostra's Navboard that was not and should not be there. It is vibrant and terrifying to eyes that cannot make sense of it. I hear a sound from behind me, unidentifiable except that it might sound like purple, that selfsame purple that sent fractal pixelization running across the Navboard. The sound seems to reach octaves above my comprehension. Monitors are lit with warning signs somehow unable to turn on fast enough or bright enough to signify the implications of this unknown catastrophe. There is a focal point of color around the words "Quantum

Transporter" and the QTransport's screen image. Then in an instant it is fully silent and all the lights are off. This is not the whiteness, but a dark black of horrible waiting. It is so quick that I receive both pictures within the span of this lightning-flash-memory.

Someone in the QTransport. I see their shoulders tense and drawn up together. Their neck bears lines of anticipation, and their face is something I cannot see but which I know is pulled tight with that same need to hurry. They are tall and backlit by a soft glow of green. I see a crumpled uniform sleeve on their left arm and below that simmering burns. Glittering on a single finger on the hand of that outstretched arm that comes from those tense shoulders is a silver band. I remember feeling a distinct pain driven in by its miniature rainbow effect. My gut seems to sink three lightyears below the deck. They say that a captain always goes down with his ship, and I consider the difference between sea and space and sailors that once had time to decide on the course of abandonment. There is no time; there is no chance to swim. There is no water or place to abandon into unless I could make it onto the platform where I see the person with the tense shoulders and the red burnt hand standing. I am aware of echoing shouts. I am aware of the vague desire for the QTransport to phase my atoms to a place that is not here but is not nowhere. I am

aware of stepping towards it and then unaware of everything.

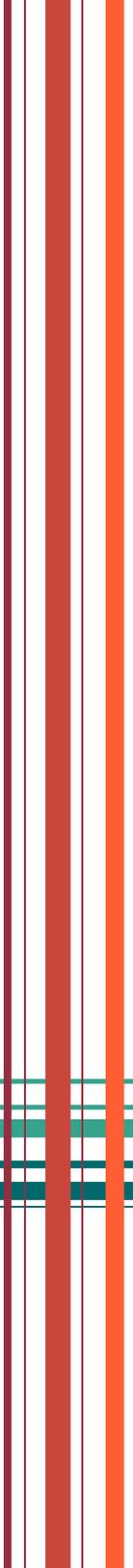
Everything in strips. Stripes of blue then white then new blue and brighter white—a barcode of blinding light seemingly strapped across my pupils. These empty bars distort the picture, dividing the shades of blue that seem somehow unblue and unright and unreal but the realest I have ever seen, certainly realer than the interrupting absence of the white. I hear a stuttering splash of waves and see what I imagine is a sea and stacked above it what I feel must be a sky and above that what I know is the outer space that connects all planets whether blue, unblue, or overblue. Filling in the white parts of my vision, I interpret a full landscape atilt before me on this strange world's surface where concave pebbles prick into my sides. I have only a moment to consider it, only a moment to capture the details in the wave's crest where a hand of dark red reaches helplessly to the right which should be up which means I must not be up or right. As I blink to figure this out, I am back to the white space.

A fizzing like the surface of a hot-tub where drops of water leap and return in solar-flare style, only these are my atoms. I see the edges of my hands as if without proper lenses to put them into focus. They are blurred and wavering. They are

made of atom leaping energy instead of flesh and barriers. I feel unbound and half there. I see a strip of empty space running down through my elbow—this is not from the vision gaps which I have quickly cataloged and of which I know their patterns. This is a new blankness where my skin and my veins and all that which should be arm is substituted by empty space and the feeling of an orange heat. I see this fuzzy outline of my fingers and behind it and in its gaps a brown that is the dirt I feel beneath my feet. Its damp softness is staccatoed by grey painful rocks undertoe. Peripherally I am surrounded by blue and deeper blue and my head rings with its whale-like whisper, this time sounding in octaves too low. I have a vague fear that this blue will flush out the orange and I will scatter into white, but there is something unnatural about the fear that I cannot ground, that I cannot grasp. The idea leaps around, but I find no solid place to put it.

This is all I remember about The Event. This is all I think I must have left to remember. The pieces of me with other memories have been burnt up and turned into blank white barcodes on my brain, an asymmetric Cantor Set of missing matter. But where there is the white absence of myself, there is the leaping, lacing energy of the orange heat. It strings together the lighting flashes of technicolor moments I still own--silver, purple, green, yellow, or-

ange-- the matter that still remembers. I know now that If I could have been the red hand drowning in the sea I would have chosen so. If I could have been one of the unaccounted for silver uniforms I would be glad. But I am the one still living leftover in the afterheat, and I am convinced that it is the worst kind of living there is.



Captain Crepe and the Ballad of Floppy Joe by Raymond Hanus

Come near, all me hearties, and let me tell ye,
Of a tale of woe upon the blue sea.
Many pirates there are, both wide and tall.
But I, Captain Crepe, have surpassed them all.
I have explored from the far northern ocean
Where the dreaded Ghost Ship is always in motion
To the grim mesa island in the far south
(I even escaped from the Tangleweed's mouth)
But that is a story for another day!
But hark; list' ye to my words as I say
To you the story of that fateful hour
When I encountered a fearsome power
And my dearest companion flew right off of my head!
Even I, Captain Crepe, was almost made dead.
My tale begins thus: Once, on the ocean blue,
I directed my ship, The Brown Bagel true
Away from an island where I had concealed
My valuable treasure—with the loot sealed
In a large chest by a great lock and key
The latter of which had never left me.
As it was tucked inside of my hat.
(But don't worry; I shall get back to that).
On the distant horizon, I spotted a vessel
With gold for the taking—if I was successful
In plundering it, and taking its loot!
There might even be cases of rum to boot.
This odd-looking ship had a crooked mainmast
But of my concerns, this was the last.

So I guided Brown Bagel alongside the craft,
And called "Ahoy, mateys, I've moored near your aft,
So you'd best be givin' me all of your booty,
Or Brown Bagel's cannons will be gettin' all shooty!"
However, I saw this raid might be problematic
As their captain leapt up on the deck (quite dramatic).
A sea monster was he, the captain of them all
With gleaming red eyes, and fangs long and tall.
He bellowed my way, "What right have ye,
To plunder my vessel and leave us to the sea?
Me lads, open fire!" The gold captain called
To his monstrous crew—which obeyed one and all.
I suddenly realized he captained a warship.
So I ran just as swift as the crack of a whip
To shoot my own cannons the way of the monster
But the fell golden captain was not an imposter.
He revealed to me his very great skill
At making cannonballs fly at the place where he will.
For three days and nights we had a great scuffle
Our vessels both trembled amid the kerfuffle.
But neither of us could claim the victory
For either of us to flee was contradictory
To our pirating natures—we were both too brave
To let our honor sink beneath the waves.
When all of sudden, what came on the scene,
But a foul sea beast—the sky turned to green
And the water boiled as this creature erupted
From the face of the sea which its presence corrupted.
A monstrous hand made up our tormentor
With a single great eye in the palm's exact center.
The Black Hand it is called—to this day it strikes fear
In the hearts of all folk who dare to come near.

With a terrible bellow it swiped at Brown Bagel
I ducked my head down as quick as t'was able.
But the dark monster's claw forced me to abandon
My head's truest friend and my dearest companion.

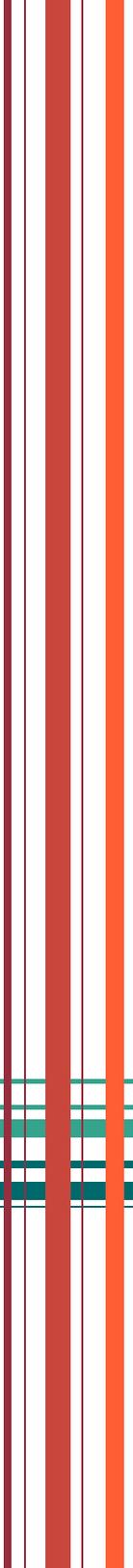
But let me explain—Floppy Joe is a hat
Which in a dark alley I rescued from a cat.
It had graced my head in all my adventures
On it was pictured the crossbones in dentures.

My dear Floppy Joe flew across the sky
And with my dearest wish it did not comply.
Since it landed on the head of the Sea Monster Captain
At that moment I'd greatly have liked to have slapped him.

But I was not able, for with a strong grip,
The Black Hand lifted up my entire ship!
And with a howl of rage tossed it through the air
This turn of events gave me quite a scare.
Brown Bagel came crashing down onto the shore
Of fair distant Silron, but not even an ore
Escaped being completely broken or smashed.

My loyal Brown Bagel was tragically trashed!
It was not until later that I realized
That the key to my treasure in my hat I'd disguised!
To this very day I still dwell in the wreckage,
Where I maintain a shop to pass on my message
To all heroes willing to hunt down the creature
Of the black depths. Although I'm no teacher,
I've taught many young sailors the ways of the sea

In order that they might reclaim my key
And dear Floppy Joe (oh, I miss my hat so
Even if Floppy's mere headgear, I know)
From the Sea Monster Captain armored in his mail.
I hope ye learned from it, for here ends my tale.



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We welcome submissions from any member of the Wheaton College community, whether student, faculty, staff, or alum. Only two fiction pieces from any one author may be submitted per issue.
- For copyright reasons, we must limit our published selection to original characters and worlds only. Please, no fan-fiction or fan-art.
- While the journal's main emphasis is on fiction, we will also consider poetry, non-fiction, essay, and art for publication.
- The journal will only publish genre fiction. The genres included are:
 - Science fiction
 - Fantasy
 - Mystery
 - Action/Adventure
 - Horror
 - Western
- We are interested in any mix of these or similar genres. If your piece falls under a genre we missed, please contact us and ask about it. We will most likely welcome your story!
- Short fiction is preferred, but chapters of longer stories may have the opportunity to be published serially.
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- Art submissions must have as their main subject something to do with the target genres. Please submit your work as a high-resolution PDF.

Deadlines

Submission deadlines are:

- Fall semester—October 31
- Spring semester—March 30

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