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#ZINE

A DIGITAL PUBLICATION
FOR TWEENS & TEENS



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A NOTE FROM MISS BLAIR



The Teen Advisory Group just held the 2023 Fantasy Writing Contest this January, and they had some outstanding writers submit their work for consideration. I was lucky enough to help judge the entries and was floored by all the amazing submissions from our local community of writers from grades 6-12.

In true #Zine fashion, we wanted to celebrate all these inspiring writers and have given them their own editions- one for grades 6-8 and one for grades 9-12. This edition is for our awesome middle grade participants!

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LEVELLING THE SCALES

by Julia Pierce-Stonecipher

Dear Judges at the Prescott Public Library,

I know this may be difficult to believe, but everything you are about to read is 100% true. It's the story of my life.

My throat stung and all of the breath had left my body. I tried to swim back to the surface, but only made it up a few feet. I needed to get untied, or I would drown. I refused to die here. I would not die at his hands.

My vision became unfocused, and I saw shadows drifting around me. Finally, against every instinct in my body I took a breath. Salt water rushed through my lungs. And I breathed again, and again. And again.

I opened my eyes and saw that the shadowy figures weren't my imagination, these strange creatures swam towards me.

I tried to get away but was quickly reminded of the ropes. All I could do was sink. The thing came at me and I saw that it was a girl-- with a tail, and decisive, turquoise eyes. Her tail, though, took my breath away. It looked like it was made of glitter and algae, and it doubled her size.

And she has a knife. I fought as best as I could, but the knots rubbed against my wrists and ankles. She grabbed my hands and in one swift motion, removed the ropes. "What?" I tried to speak but my voice sounded strange and echo-ey, like my ears needed to pop. She was laughing. I couldn't stop staring at her ~- tail.

I looked down at my feet, which were still bound- but still feet. Calm yourself Cornelia. Answering my thoughts she said, "Give it time and you'll really be one of us, but first-". She gestured toward my feet and another siren cut the ropes.

"My name's Sapphire, come with me, we will help you." Her voice sounded so melodic and convincing, but her smile was sharp, with pointy teeth.

But I followed her, and she showed me things I never dreamed of. We swam through the entire ocean, seeking shelter in reefs and old shipwrecks. Sapphire taught me about what we are, and what really lies under the surface.

One night at dinner she asked me about what happened the night we met.

"My stepbrother happened." I recalled, "After my father died, he took over the mercantile and crowned himself captain, but, since I knew the crew and the job better, he got rid of me first chance he got-", my voice broke as I overflowed with memories.



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LEVELLING THE SCALES- CONTINUED

She pretended not to notice, "You must have really scared him"

"He saw me as a threat, and feared I would revolt," I simply explained, but I don't know that I had ever thought this myself. I mean, I was telling the truth but I didn't believe it.

"We should get revenge, we could sink their ship?"-She smiled mischievously, like she just suggested we have dessert before dinner.

"What? But the crew would drown?"

"So? They. Let. *You*. Drown...*Cornelia*, I mean did they even try to defend you? Did they show any restraint when they tied you up? Or even look away when they made you walk the dang plank?"

I froze, I had never really realized that. I mean they were my friends, my *family*.

"Well, Nerio-", I started but she quickly cut me off.

"Who? The little cabin boy you crushed on?" she sneered, "I'm sorry, but the others didn't care. they didn't stop it." She carefully reached over to me, acknowledging my drowning tears this time.

"They were my family," I sobbed.

"We're your family now. And *around here* we protect our own."

And- to make a long story short (and under 1000 words), that's how I got there.

I approached the ship, preparing to board, with the others in tow, waiting to attack. By the time we got there my legs were back. Thanks to Sapphire I'd finally gotten the hang of shifting. I immediately recognized Nerio, but there were some new faces.

I boarded the boat and they all were so shocked to see me, and they looked so remorseful, I almost felt bad, almost. None of them said a word, not that I blamed them.

As Nerio disappeared in the crowd, Brutus and Knox escorted me to the Captain's cabin. "He'll be with you shortly-The Captain," Knox stuttered, before closing the door he added, I am so sorry, for what happened."

Once I was alone, I felt my stomach twist. They seemed sorry. *But how many storms had you been through before they suddenly decided you were bad luck?!*

I looked around the room, and saw a cello sitting in the corner, and some doubloons scattered across the davenport. "I thought it would take longer for him to resort to piracy," I whispered to myself.



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LEVELLING THE SCALES- CONTINUED

Then, I heard footsteps heading toward my door, floorboards creaking like they wanted to give out. I braced myself. I could finally kill the man outside, my stepbrother, Nicolas. I heard the door unlock. *He's here.*

Nerio walked in, not Nicolas. 'What's he doing?!' I think, bull choose my words carefully, "Are you allowed in here?"

"Yeah.", he looked so conflicted, I didn't know what to do.

"Where's my brother?"

"The bottom of the ocean-where he wanted you to be."

A "*What?*" is all I can manage. My mind flashed to the others, waiting outside. Waiting to kill a dead man. I wanted him dead sure, but I wanted to kill him. I *deserved* to kill him.

"Well, you were the captain everyone wanted. He killed you. I killed him"

"Why?" I can't think straight.

He broke eye contact, staring at the ceiling like he wanted it to cave in. "Because I-" he took a breath before resuming eye contact- "I love you"

My tongue swelled up and I couldn't speak, I couldn't breathe. It felt like I was drowning all over again.

Well I hope you liked my *tail*,

-*Cornelia Thatcher*



LOLA

by Zia Engle



THE UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE

by Louis Ford

Smythen Soar, and his group of warriors were advancing on the Dragon Warrior's camp. Dragon Warriors were bulky beasts of men who were thorough when it came to their battle ground defenses and armor. Their helmets were shaped like a dragon's head, with fangs covering their eyes and noses. Protecting their necks was a collar of hammered metal that partially covered the warrior's chest. On their hands they wore thick metal gauntlets. Besides the gauntlets and sabatons covering their feet, they were clad in scale mail.



The warriors that Smythen fought alongside were the Falcon Warriors. Perched in the tall pines, they used the concealment of the trees to watch the Dragon Warrior camp. While they watched they fastened their gliding suits and loosened the swords in their sheaths.

The leader of the assault team, Leedarz, gave the command to get ready with a bird whistle "whooooo!" The warriors shifted into the crouch position. "Here it goes." Smythen thought to himself.

Leedarz waved his hand to signal the attack and gracefully jumped from his branch, outstretching his arms and legs so he resembled a falcon. The other men did the same. Smythen took a deep breath before jumping and gliding down. He quickly drew his bow and nocked an arrow. The other men had already done so. One by one they let their arrows fly.

The Dragon Warriors were taken by surprise when the arrows and the giant falcons, with razor-sharp talons, came soaring out of nowhere. One squire, dressed in a turquoise surcoat started blowing a large horn. His chest rising and falling with every breath. "Wow!" thought Smythen. "That horn has lousier acoustics than a untuned cello!"

A Dragon Warrior named, Clyde Scales, made a large slash at Smythen's left wing with his huge hand-and-a-half sword. Knocking Smythen clean out of the air and onto the hard-packed ground. He would have made a large "Oooohh!" if there had been a single cubic centimeter of air left in his lungs! Getting his breath back, he was able to draw his sword in time to block his attacker's next blow. Smoothen demonstrated a series of complicated maneuvers that his little stepbrother would love to have witnessed. This made Clyde back off just long enough for Smythen to get to his feet to continue fighting.

The moment he stood up he heard a loud, bone-chilling, roar. There was only one explanation, a real-life dragon!

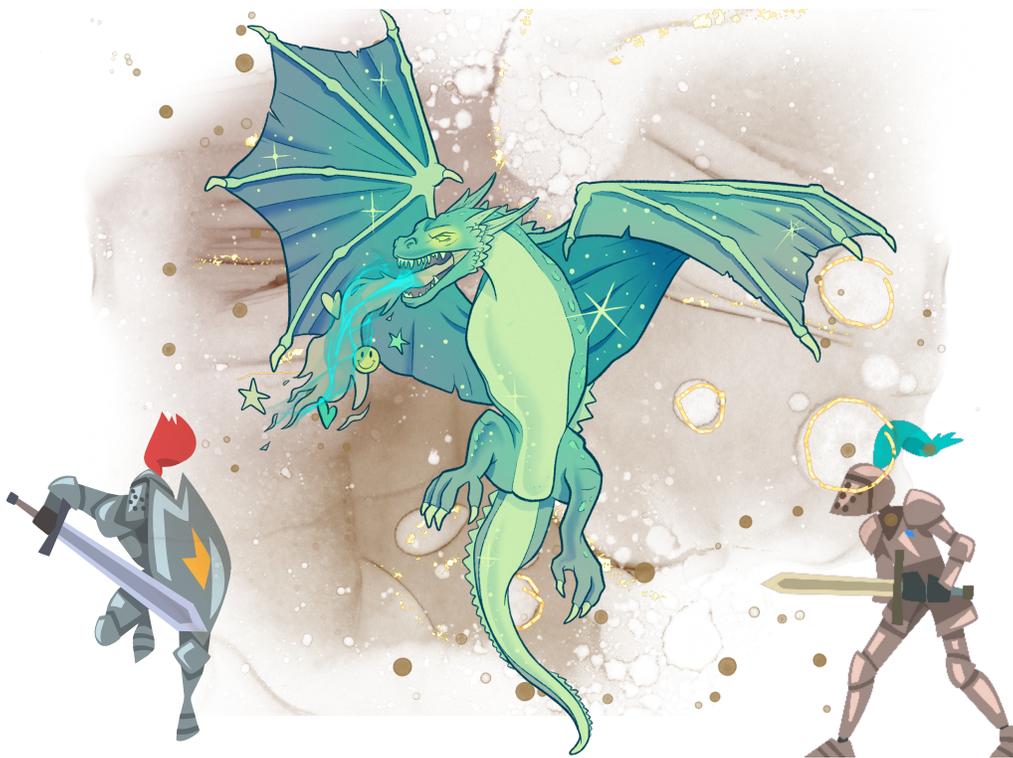
Smythen slowly and cautiously turned his head away from Clyde. On the ground, right behind him, was a large, green, almost beautiful Dragon! The huge beast looked as if Smythen's little sister had covered it in the glitter paint left over from her birthday. Believe me, that's glittery!

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THE UNEXPECTED ALLIANCE- CONTINUED

The beast would have looked beautiful if it hadn't been trying to kill them. The dragon started to wreck everything in its path. Smythen stole a glance back at Clyde, who seemed just as surprised by the dragon!

While Clyde stared at the dragon Smythen made his move. He raised his sword to eye level and then brought it down towards Clyde's hip in an underhand stroke. Clyde anticipated and blocked the blow. While their swords were still together Smythen kicked Clyde square on the chest, knocking the wind out of him and shoving him to the ground, unconscious. "Well," thought Smythen "That takes care of that." At that moment there was a huge, crash! It was from a large pine tree that . . . Well, used to be standing. It fell to the ground and was now engulfed in flames! It was producing so much smoke that it covered the battlefield from end to end. Leaving Smythen, Clyde and the dragon cut off from the rest of the Warriors. The dragon's large black eyes were fixed on Smythen, contemplating his next move.



While the dragon was looking at Smythen, Clyde was regaining his consciousness. His eyes opened slowly, he sat up and began to roll his shoulders to stretch while he figured out what was going on. Suddenly he saw Smythen, who was being chased through the smoke by the dragon! Clyde was conflicted, on the one hand, Smythen had been his enemy. On the other hand, Smythen had been an honorable opponent who had fought well against the best Dragon Warrior Training Academy class of 1256! He decided that the "Worthy opponent" hand outweighed the "Enemy" hand.

Clyde got up as fast as he could but due to the fact that his back was in extreme pain, was not very fast! Despite his pain he got up anyway to help his enemy! Smythen's life was now literally in the dragon's talons! He made the mistake of stopping in front of the dragon to reposition his sword. Now the dragon had him pinned to the ground by his chest.

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GRAY

by Lily Merrill

I woke up early (like my parents always made me) and looked around my room. The bright turquoise wallpaper with pink stripes made me want to vomit, but my parents wouldn't let me change it. You see, my parents were Mr. and Mrs. Perfection. They always did the right things for the right reasons. I was the exact opposite. I wished my room was painted black, and that I could wear all black leather instead of the pink, glitter-and-lace-covered dresses my parents always chose for me, and that I had the option to make the wrong, bad, awesome choice. I quietly tiptoed down the hallway past my parents' and step-brother's rooms (my stepbrother, by the way, was the perfect child. While I was off collecting spiders, he learned the cello, so naturally I hated him). I eased open the door and stepped out into the early-morning light. One of my daily chores was to get water from the river. As I walked, some people said hello: "Hi, Astrid!" "What's up, Astrid?" "How's your day, Astrid?" But I ignored them. These were my parents' friends. Everyone else knew to avoid me.

Eventually came to the woods, where I could I relax a little. I could think my own thoughts without my parents breathing down my neck. I walked around, scowling at the birds, which were too loud to think over, until I finally made it to the stream. I stopped in my tracks. There was already someone there. But that wasn't unusual, that was where most people came for water. What had made me stop was that she looked just like I wanted to be. Not her short blonde hair and brown eyes, I was fine with my own long, dark hair and green eyes, but how she was dressed and carried herself. She was in all black, walking tall with long strides and was the opposite of who I was supposed to be. I walked up with my pail, intending to ignore her, but she approached me. "I like your dress," she said, with a voice lighter than I expected "I wish my parents would buy me one like it."



"You've got to be joking," I said, looking down at my dress, a light blue number with glitter, "I wish I could dress like you! I've wished my whole life for something like that!" "My parents would love to have a daughter like you instead of me.

"Kill the mice, Azula, don't save them! I am never bad enough for them," she said with a long sigh. "Oh, sorry, that's my name. Azula. Azula Deimos."

"I'm Astrid Jasper, and my parents would love a child like you, one they could dress in these ridiculous costumes." I said, gesturing to my dress.

"Sounds like we have the same problem, just reversed. If only we could just escape it," her eyes widened, "What if we could?!" she exclaimed. "We could leave right now! I have money my parents made me steal from this old lady. Let's just go!" I looked at her skeptically. "Come on, Astrid," she said, "I know you probably don't trust me yet, but we both need to get away from this. I'll go even if you don't, so you might as well come."

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GRAY- CONTINUED

I thought for a while. "Ok," I finally said, "I must be crazy, but ok." I know that sounds insane, running away from my home with only a moment's notice, but I did it for two reasons. One: I couldn't go another day with my parents and stepbrother, and two: this was a great opportunity to finally be myself.

We were about to leave when suddenly a roar came from nearby. Azula and I ran towards the noise, which turned out to be an indescribably ugly troll that was in the process of attacking a town, looking for its next meal. I looked next to me, expecting to find Azula. But she wasn't there. She stood in front of the troll, staring it straight in the eyes, holding a sword that came from who-knows-where. "Hey, you big, ugly brute! Leave those people ALONE!" she said, waving the sword. She then proceeded to stab the troll in its slime-encrusted toes. The troll roared furiously, and grabbed her around her waist.



"Let go!" she said to the troll, and then to me, "Astrid, help!" Now, don't get me wrong, heroism was not my thing, but, despite all else, I couldn't just let Azula die. She was starting to become my first (ugh) friend. So, I grabbed the sword Azula had dropped, and charged towards the troll. It hadn't noticed me; it was still looking at its dinner. I climbed to the top of the nearest cottage and jumped up and off towards the troll, reaching its arm. I climbed up the arm and to its heart, raising my sword and inflicting the fatal wound. The troll fell to the ground with a boom, releasing Azula. The villagers, coming out of their hiding places, lifted me and Azula on their shoulders, cheering. "So, Astrid," Azula said, "how does it feel to be a hero?" "It feels ..." I paused. "Good." One of the villagers offered Azula some water. She took it, drinking deeply, and then fell to the ground, dead. The villager took off their cloak, turning towards me. "Mother?! How could you?!" I screamed. "Sorry, dear, but she wouldn't have been a good influence" "She was the best influence I ever had. Now go AWAY!" I sat and thought for hours by my only friend's body, I didn't eat, didn't speak. Then I got up, wiped my tears, and walked calmly away. I never spoke to my mom after that. I continued to be mostly evil, but made sure to sprinkle some good in, remembering my friend. I don't just take--I also give. Because now I know this world isn't black or white, it's both, and neither. Gray. And I can be just like it.

KOYUKI: A JAPANESE FAIRY TALE

by Aliyah Alpert

When Koyuki woke up, she couldn't help being happy. She loved the turquoise-blue sky, and the beautiful fall leaves.

That morning, as she headed to the market to buy the few supplies her family could afford, she noticed the unusually large crowds. Weaving her way through the crowd, she realized that Seiji, Prince of Yukiharu, was giving an address! How had she forgotten? It was still early, she decided to listen to the address for a few minutes.

Somehow she found herself at the front of the crowd, and the village noblemen started yelling at her. She apologized, and fled towards the market. She glanced back momentarily, and saw that Seiji was looking at her. Embarrassed, she looked away. As she ran, she chided herself, she hated drawing attention to herself.

After a few days, she headed to the market again, and felt someone tap her shoulder. Startled, she spun around, and found herself facing Prince Seiji! She apologized and was about to race away when he called "Wait!"

Confused, she turned around. Blushing, Seiji said, "What is your name?"

"Koyuki, your Highness." He replied, "Nice to meet you, though I guess we met a few days ago. I suppose you know my name?"

She smiled slightly and said "Yes, your Highness."

He invited her to have tea with him. Nervously, she explained that it was a busy day, but she thanked him for the invitation.

"Tomorrow, then?" he said, "I know where a secret garden is. My parents wouldn't find us." Koyuki replied nervously, "Okay, how about I meet you here tomorrow?" "Sounds good," Seiji replied.

She said, "I had better go, my parents will worry."

"See you tomorrow" the prince called after her. She quickly smiled back at him as she left. Seiji was happy to see her again, but his mind was filled with the different ways his parents might react, but he was fairly sure they wouldn't approve, just from her kimono he could tell she was poor.



The next day, Koyuki left the house, telling her parents she was meeting a friend. This was not untrue, she told herself; but she believed that Seiji probably didn't consider her a friend. When she arrived at the decided place, Seiji led her to the garden. Looking around, she marveled at its beautiful fall colors. Awed, she asked "Did you make this?"

Seiji smiled. "Yes," he replied, "I'm glad you like it. Please, sit down."

"Your Highness," Koyuki began, "Thank you for bringing me here, it's beautiful."

Seiji replied, "Thank you. Also, please call me Seiji."

Koyuki smiled. "Thank you, Seiji," she replied. "Also, didn't you mention a dragon?"

"Yes," said Seiji, "I think I might have seen one." "Really?" she replied. "Yes," Seiji said, "Perhaps, he gave me the luck to meet you."

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KOYUKI: A JAPANESE FAIRY TALE— CONTINUED

Koyuki looked up at the sky, "Oh! I must go, my parents have been expecting me for an hour already, at least! Goodbye!"

"Let's meet here every week," Seiji called after her.

"Sounds good" she replied. So, every week, they met in the garden and had tea together.

One winter day, as they walked through the glittering, snowy garden, something moved. They were surprised by what they saw. It was a dragon! Suddenly, the dragon spoke. "Prince Seiji, I know that you haven't told your parents about Koyuki. Perhaps that was wise, at first.

But the time has come for you to tell them. However, they will likely be unhappy."

Seiji replied, "I know. They would likely banish her, as with all they deem criminals." He sighed, and held Koyuki close. "I don't want her to be banished."

"I know, but it's necessary. Present her to your parents." the dragon replied.

"And who is this?" asked King Fuyuhiko, when they arrived, "Some peasant girl who wishes to become a servant?"

"No, she is honorable, and good, and I love her," Seiji replied, "I wish to marry her."

"NO!" the king thundered. "You will not marry a peasant girl! She shall be banished! Guards!" The guards escorted her away, and soon she was lost, deep in the forest.

Angrily, Seiji left Fuyuhiko's presence, and asked the dragon for advice. "Look for her," he said, "If your love is true, you shall find her."

The king made an announcement later that day. "Prince Seiji has disappeared! We hope he returns soon. Until then, his stepbrother is the heir."

As Koyuki walked around sadly, she heard music. It sounded like that of a cello, melancholy and beautiful. She followed it, and she found a water nymph. "I've been looking for you," the nymph said, "as has prince Seiji."

"I know," Koyuki said, "but we cannot, it seems, find each other."

"You will," said the nymph, "If your love is strong. Stay here, and I'll take care of you. During the day, you can look for him. At night, you will have somewhere safe to sleep."

Through her sadness, Koyuki smiled. "Thank you," she said, "I accept." For weeks, they looked for each other in vain.

One day, Koyuki wandered far, and she became lost. She began to sob, Seiji was nowhere to be found, and she didn't know where she was. However, as she wept, someone tapped her shoulder. She turned around, and it was Seiji! She fell into his arms, still sobbing, but now with joy. "You found me," she whispered. "Yes," he replied, "for our love was true."

Even as they embraced, they saw the winter melt away, and the cherry trees began to bloom. Seiji led her to the garden, where they spoke to the dragon. "Your parents are sorry for what they have done," the dragon said, "Go, marry her, and someday, you shall become Yukihiro's rulers."

So, with joy in their hearts, Seiji and Koyuki made their way back to the palace, where they were married. And the village of Yukihiro enjoyed a time of peace, which lasts to this day.



THE THREAD OF A FAMILY

by Brielle Bates

I'm Kari.

People ask me about that awkward subject. Do I have a new stepdad and stepbrother. Yes. Do I like them?

Not really. They just don't feel like family. My stepdad is nice. So is my stepbrother, Leo. They have a gigantic mansion and decided we should move out of our cramped apartment to this "heavenly" house. We took a two-day road trip to get to it.

It's a pale, yellowish-white color with gargoyles and lawn gnomes scattered around and lots of rose bushes. It looked like a scene out of a fairytale. The neighbor lady, a squat elderly lady, had baked cookies for us, so my mom and stepdad went over to talk to her. Then I heard a strange noise from inside the mansion. Music. Strange haunting, luring music. Cello music. I turned towards the open door.

"Do you hear that?" Leo nodded. I raced up the steps and opened the door. I pushed it open and saw a small room. The walls were stone and draped in moss. It was obviously old and gave off a musty odor. At the back of the room was a bejeweled pedestal with a cello on top. It was playing an enchanting and shrill melody by itself. It made my eyes misty. The cello was quite simple, with a deep chocolate hue and glimmering strings. I moved closer and touched a string and it made a creepy note. Then, like a whirlwind, I was flooded with memories. Sad ones. Most of them were faded. I noticed myself sinking into the depths, overwhelmed with the music and memories. I wouldn't have made it out if it weren't for Leo. He grabbed my arm and yanked me backwards, making us topple over. As I got up, I saw a sapphire portal in front of us. Before I could say anything, Leo jumped headfirst into it. "Leo!" I screamed.

I jumped into the swirling abyss (though feet first). I landed with a thud on something slimy. I heard water lapping by my ear. I stood up, and realized I was standing on oversized lily pads and mustard-colored flowers. There were also magenta and lilac-colored curly plants. Ahead I saw Leo and he was... on a horse. A glitter covered horse that looked like sparkly glass. Its mane was a shimmery silver. Leo waved from the back of the horse. I stomped over on top of the lily pads.

"What were you thinking? Are you insane?" I yelled. "And why are you on a sparkly horse?"

Leo shrugged. "I like horses I guess."

I rolled my eyes. "Well, that explains everything!"

"Come on," Leo said, offering a hand up. I took it and got on the horse's back. With a whoosh, we were airborne! I held in a scream as we dove. We approached a mountain with a big set of double doors. The horse nudged us towards the doors. They opened with a beautiful noise. Inside there was an old stone well. The ground was speckled with flowers and platinum coins.

"It's like a wishing well!" Leo exclaimed.

He scooped up a coin and plopped it into the water. A few minutes passed as Leo stared into the water. As he turned, I could see he was sad.

"It's a memory well," he said.



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THE THREAD OF A FAMILY- CONTINUED

“Oh,” I muttered, furrowing my brows. I grabbed a coin and tossed it in, curiosity overwhelming me. I was standing in a room with wood floors and bars on the walls, a huge glimmering mirror. Piano music drifted from the corner. I saw myself at age five, with all my ballet stuff on, as well as my favorite stuffed llama tucked under my arm.

No. This was not the Great Faceplant Incident. No. As teacher watched from the corner, I prepared to leap. Leo appeared beside me. I glared at him.

“You can’t snoop on people’s memories,” I said.

Leo snorted. My younger self leapt, tripped over thin air, and fell forward in an epic bellyflop. Leo chortled.

“Yipes! What a fall!”

I elbowed him in the ribs. Hard.

“Ouch,” he mumbled.

The memory passed and we were back by the well.

“Look!” Leo pointed to a spinning silver portal. He leapt into it, making me moan. I followed. We crashed into a stone bridge. There were some blood-red vines growing and twisting along the sides. We were immersed in a cool, dark-gray haze. Below, an endless stretch of sea.

“Should we jump?” Leo asked.

“No!” I ordered. “I don’t think we’re supposed to!”

Leo snickered and pointed to a wooden sign. It read, “JUMP!” Leo ran off the edge and shouted, “See you!” as he cannonballed in. My legs became Jell-O. I felt dizzy as I peered down. I took a breath and leaped off the edge. I plummeted downwards and hit the water. Underwater, I saw Leo. He waved. Next to him was a turquoise puffball with shining eyes.

“I’m Coral!” it said.

I waved. Coral blew pink bubbles around our heads so we could breathe.

Coral told us to dive into the dark murkiness. Coral chatted happily as we went. Then I saw this beautiful sea life universe, bursting with color and light. Coral and plants of every color waved welcomingly. Fish swam around, glowing neon algae lit up the city and anemones pulsed on the pastel rocks.

“Wow!” I breathed.

Coral dived down to a vast crater full of wispy, blue tentacles to a massive clamshell with a glowing ball of thread perched atop a scarlet cushion. Coral nudged me gently.

“Go on, its ok.”

I picked up the thread.

“The Thread of Family,” Coral whispered. I felt a burst of love and happiness, mixed with so many other emotions. I smiled and then we were back by the house in a burst of color. Leo grinned.

“That was awesome!”

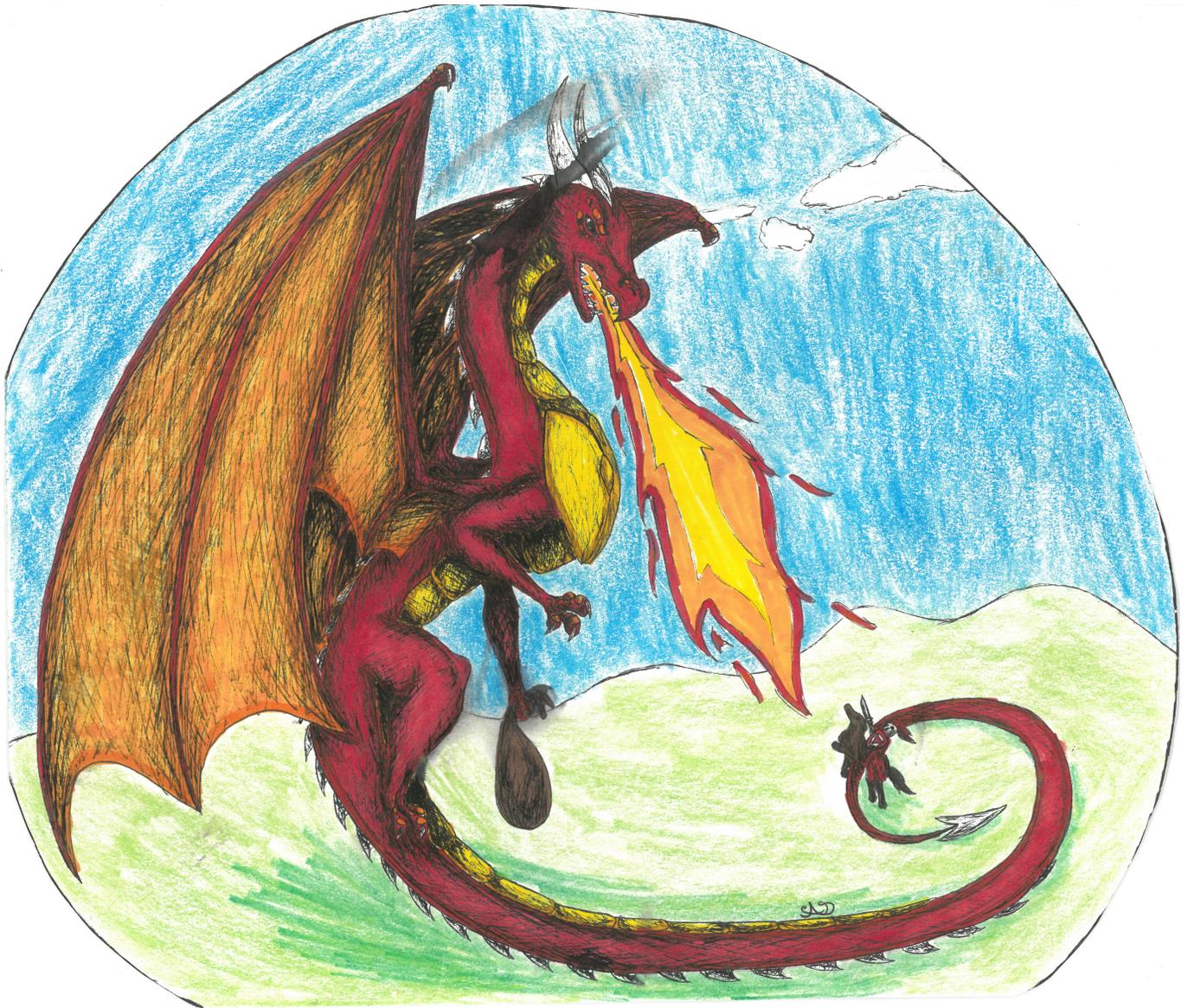
I nodded.

“Oh, and I’ll never forget that lovely fall of yours!” he said. Then we ran down to tackle our parents with a loving group hug.



DRAGON FIGHT

by Audrey Delaney



BROTHER CHRONICLES

by Riley Gamble

The babies were different, everybody knew it, one was on fire, and the other one was made purely out of metal, but let's get into how. The first, Phoenix, was accidentally dropped into a volcano but was saved by a phoenix, becoming half-phoenix. The other, Golem, ate a small shatanium golem, shadow-infused titanium, at only a day old. The weird thing? They only looked different when they were A) separated B) angry or C) they wanted to. They both loved the cello and the color turquoise. Oh yeah, they had a stepbrother. From age 3 they lived a pretty normal life until age 12 then things got complicated.

Golem

One day after school, I went to a mirror. I know what you're thinking, wow! *A mirror, cool are you going to describe it?* No, I'm not. You can imagine it any way you like. I then decided to jump into the mirror, I don't know how, or why but that glittery mirror teleported me to... I don't know where. You're probably wondering what my name is. Well, it's Golem. Anyways as I tumbled through darkness, I realized that my real brother was probably wherever I was now. I hit the metal, "Owwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!" I screamed. I got up after falling and left the shadowy cave. Back to where I was, my brother had disappeared last week, I thought that my mom had just grounded him, but no.

Phoenix

I woke up in the same prison that I had fallen asleep in, I'd wished that I would have been out of it. I sighed. *Why do they want me?* I thought to myself. As soon as I thought it, my prison mate Zed said as if reading my mind. "They want you because you're a half-phoenix."

"NO, I'M NOT!" I screamed at him, this was the fifth time he'd mentioned it. After a moment of silence, Zed asked, "Why don't you take off that amulet?"

"Because," I replied, "my mom said that we must wear these amulets!"

"Take it off." Zed insisted.

"Fine, but, look if we burst into flames it's your fault," I said, as I took off the amulet. I burst into flames.

Golem

"Take the amulet off already," a rock called Squawk said.

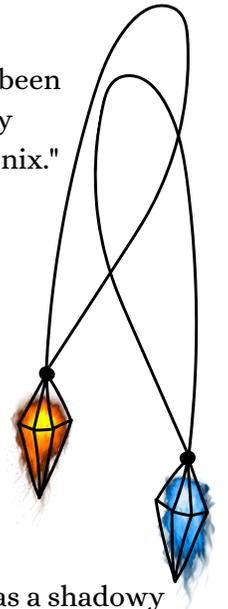
"I've told you eight times already. No!" I told him.

"Just try it. Please?" Squawk asked kindly

"Fine," I said, I then carefully took off the amulet. I heard a BOOM, and suddenly I was a shadowy hunk of metal.

"Become a ball." screeched Squawk.

I thought about being a ball and, shink, I was a big indestructible metal ball. I tried to move and I started to go, going slower at first, then faster and faster until I was at sprint speed. I thought about becoming human again, and I was, "When you kept asking me to take off that amulet, I thought that you were my stepbrother," I told him. My stepbrother was the worst, he always got first dibs and bullied us. I looked up and saw a big flame coming straight at me.



BROTHER CHRONICLES- CONTINUED

Zed

"Come on Zed," Phoenix said to which I said,

"Yeah, yeah, I'm coming. Hours after Phoenix melted the prison door, Phoenix was turned around, I snuck off, navigating the winding tunnels like a computer navigating the web.

"Boss, you're here." said my favorite servant Cyprian

"Yes... put a tracker on the boy... Phoenix. I think his name was," I replied "because I want him dead before the new moon."

Phoenix

I finally escaped, I thought to myself "We made it!" I told Zed, or at least I thought I did. I looked behind me, after hearing no answer. He wasn't there, "Zed!" I called back into the cave. When I heard no answer, I continued forward.

"Brother, over here!" I heard Golem cry out from below me, I was still a phoenix. As soon as I did I was crushed by two massive metal arms,

"You found out that you were a magical creature," we told each other, at the same time.

"Here's a sword." he told me and handed me a scythe,

"This is not a sword," I replied

"It's not?" he asked clearly confused,

"No, become human," I told him. He then morphed back into a human.

Golem

"Let's go in," I told my brother. As we walked inside the cave he told me about how he had been captured, and his prison mate Zed, and I filled him in on my story. As we walked, I got an unnerving feeling that we were being watched. When we got to the main room, we saw Zed, Phoenix's friend there, ready to kill us.

Phoenix

"Why?" I asked as I fought to not cry,

"Why not?" Zed replied in an amused tone, loving that I was about to cry.

Golem made the first move, he became a ball and flew at him. Right as he was about to hit, Zed dodged it. Golem flew behind him into the wall with a rattling, *BOOM!* I made the next, using the "sword" that my brother gave me. Zed blocked the "sword" with ease. What he didn't see was Golem behind him with his "scythe" to stab him. Zed went down with a hollowing *thunk*. My brother became human just as I did,

"Let's get back home." I told him and we left.

Golem

We got to the cave from which we came from and climbed up it, upon reaching the top we fell through the glittery mirror. When we got up we saw our mother with an ax, and our father with a sword. He said, "Welcome back, we're going to kill you!" They sliced us to pieces.



THE OTHER SIDE

by Molly Godel

I've never seen a boy before.

Boys are myths, the only time we hear about them is in stories or legends passed down for generations.

We heard stories about little girls who saw a boy once, they told their mothers and we never saw them again. Other stories were about boys coming here, and making friends with the girls, but that was centuries ago when there weren't as many guards around.

It was raining, the wind was cold on my skin. We were walking to school, my hand in my mother's.

The path to school was strict like everything else. Electric gates all around us, guards standing at all edges of town, and strong doors with a special code so (just in case) nobody could get in-or out. There was no way *anyone* would be able to escape. Even if somebody was able to flee the trails, the whole place is surrounded with metal walls, and electric barbed wire as the cherry on top.

It was the day of my 15th birthday, but it was no more happier than on a usual day. When you get older, you gain knowledge and know a lot more. Everything makes sense, it's like you're connecting the dots.

I knew that when I get older, nothing's going to change. I'm gonna be stuck here forever until the day I die.

We reached the school, and I kissed my mother on the cheek goodbye. "Goodbye, mother."

"Oh, goodbye sweetie, happy birthday!" my mother smiled. I guess somebody would be content when they had a child, it is the happiest day you could possibly have in this horrible dump.

The school was very old; centuries even-which makes the place even more guarded and "protected" because of the rickety wood.

"State your name, birth date, and address," one of the guards ordered. "Astrid, April 13th, East Wary Lane 2.895," I answered.

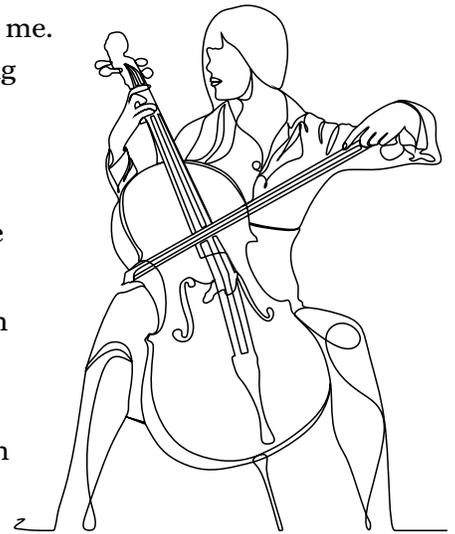
"It's your birthday ain't it?" the guard questioned.

"Yes." I entered the school quickly after the guards were interrogating me.

As you walk into the school, all you see is stairs, adorned with a red rug that runs along the entire flight. The stairs creaked each step you took. The classrooms had tall windows always on the left, nowhere else. The way we learned was with the chalkboard, nothing fancy like the "protection" around each building with high-tech controls. It was like we were living in the past.

I have the usual classes; Math, ELA, and Social Studies. 1 hour for Math and ELA, 2 hours for Social Studies, and 1 hour for band. As you can clearly see, our community is obsessed with history.

As the day flew by, Band was our last period. I played the cello, and I'm getting pretty good. I love the delicate brushing of the horse hair against the cello's strings. It makes a beautiful sound even if you don't hold...



Continued on Page 18

THE OTHER SIDE- CONTINUED

... down on a string. As I was playing and was so absorbed in my music, I didn't notice that everyone had left.

"You like the cello a lot, don't you?" My music teacher, Ms A, asked me.

I was bewildered, "Oh! Um, yes!" I stuttered.

"I could tell when you were playing. You were getting lost into the music while the other students were getting frustrated," she said.

"Yeah, it just gets me away from the troubles of the world and into more of a peaceful place."

The bell rang a 2nd time and this time I heard it. "I gotta go, see ya." The thing is, after the 3rd bell rings you'll be punished-I'm not specifying what kind of punishment-if you don't leave in time. I ran out of the band room and down the halls, when I tripped on the rug. The rug revealed a loose board, and I thought I broke it. I tried to fix it, but then I realized it was loose for a reason. There was an old rotting book underneath it. I grabbed the book and stuffed it into my bag and dashed down the stairs and through the front door. The 3rd bell rang and I was "safely" outside the building.



"Hey, you!" one of the guards called after me.

"Yeah?" I slowly turned around.

"What are you doing here so late?" the other guard asked.

"I was talking to my band teacher, Ms A."

The guard looked me up and down suspiciously. "Well run along now!" she ordered.

When I got home I dropped my bag down near the door and looked at myself in the mirror above where we put our shoes. My hair was messed up, my clothes soaking wet. Dew drops stuck in my eyelashes that looked like glitter.

I took out the book and sprinted to my room and collapsed onto my bed. I could tell that the book was old; the binding was bent, the pages were falling out, the cover was brown and rotting, and the book was called "Stepbrother." What's a stepbrother? I know that brothers are boys that have siblings, but what's the "step" part about?

I opened the book and started reading. I had no idea what was going on, and I had so many questions! I kept on reading, and the time flew by. I knew we would have my birthday celebration soon.

Then I noticed something strange; the next page had a turquoise ribbon, and certain letters were underlined.

The first letter was "I." The second was "T." When I finished reading the page, the underlined letters spelled: I-T-S-A-N-I-L-L-U-S-I-O-N. "It's an illusion." I read. I didn't realize it at first, but the book was about people being trapped... just like me, just like everyone else here, *we're* trapped. I looked out the window at the walls surrounding the town.

At that moment I knew that the metal walls were all fake.

It was an illusion.

TO BE CONTINUED...

THE UNICORN DEVIL

by Ares Hoffman

There I was, tied to a big gram cracker, about to get dark serum injected into my veins by my very own step-brother, Fillop. "Any last words" Fillop asked. The unicorn replied, "look behind you".

"Glitter beast come down stairs for breakfast please" Mommicorn said, and there was no response, so Mammicorn called one more time but more strictly, "Carol come down for breakfast" still no response so Mammicorn took off her apron, turned off the stove, put the omelets on the table and walked up the stairs to Carol's room. When she got to Carol's room there was a turquoise sticky note that said, "Off to explore more of the candy cane forest with Twinkle and yes I ate. love Carol" mom rolled her eyes and went to the table and ate the omelets all by herself.

In the forest Carol and Twinkle are navigating through candy cane trees that look exactly the same red then white, red then white over and over again on a horizon with red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple fading in the distance. Twinkle didn't get confused about where they were. Unicorn Legend says they have a navigation system in their brain that all Chibi dragons are born with. "Where are we Twinkle?" "erua" said Twinkle "I forgot i don't speak dragon" said Carol giving a small chuckle. "We're lost aren't we" Carol soon lost all hope and looked around. There in the distance was a dot that was changing colors so Carol went towards it and after a while it started to look like a portal of some sort.



Back at the house Mammicorn was worrying about the two because it was the time they were instructed to come home on multiple occasions. After an hour passed Mammicorn called U.I.U aka Unicorn Investigation Units. They came to investigate the forest. No luck. Two out of ten got lost and they sent in helicopters for them.

Carol stopped to rest on a nearby tree and ate some of the extra protein bars she had just in case something like this ever happened. It did. Then Twinkle and Carol continued their Journey towards the portal looking figure. They finally got to the portal and Carol said "should we go in?" Twinkle shrugged and then slowly nodded. Carol said "ok you go in to see if it's safe ok" Twinkle shook her head side to side so Carol ran through it.

On the other side was a plain, the grass was some type of candy and the dirt was made out of cookie crumbs. Carol's color changing main and horn stood out so much that Twinkle had to cover her eyes. At this point you are probably curious about what Carol is. Carol is a Unicorn, a very brave, pretty, and adventurous unicorn. Anyways back to the story. Carol started walking in a random direction, dropping crumbs behind her and that's when she noticed smoke coming from a tiny house a little while away. Carol started to go to the house, but Carol noticed that Twinkle was gone. She saw a trail of big footprints so she followed them. She notices that it goes in a parallel line that was going in the general direction of that house Carol was about to go to. She has a feeling that Twinkle is in trouble, so she follows the footprints.

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THE UNICORN DEVIL- CONTINUED

Carol followed it to a doggie door in the back of the house. Carol went in through the doggie door which didn't work out very well but it alerted the cello-gator. The cello mixed with an alligator looked different but super cool. The cellogator named Iris came to Carol and immediately loved her. Iris ran out of the room and came back with Twinkle and his master Fillop who is all black with red main horn and eyes. He walked towards me and picked me up. He walked into a different room while Carol was screaming. He tied Carol to a big gram cracker table and picked up a syringe and said "Any last words Carol before you turn into one of me?" Fillop said."Look behind you" said Carol and behind him was Twinkle. Twinkle bursted out of the cage on the other side of the room and came flying to Carol and untying her from the table and they ran out of the house. They didn't leave the cellogator just FYI. As they ran towards the portal There was a weird object in the sky. It was a messenger bird! It had a note tied to its foot. As it approached it didn't look like a bird more like a bat with a camo hat on. It landed on Carol's back and started to say what was on it." Dear Carol, you have Escaped this time but everywhere you go I'll be watching you! Love your brother Fillop" Then the bat perished into dust and Carol got home safely.

THE END

SKY

by Zia Engle



2063

by Eugene Lowe

INTRODUCTION

My name is Donny Pierce jr. I was part of the first generation to be born on Mars. My parents and grandparents migrated to Mars in the year 2025. The year is 2063 and I just turned 21 less than a month ago. Ever since I was a little boy I would read stories of earth, and all the amazing things about it. I would always dream about going to earth one day. Mars is... well, kinda boring. For one there are no trees, no rivers, or no oceans. My father died when I was seven and it took a long time to be ok with things. He basically died helping people colonize Mars.

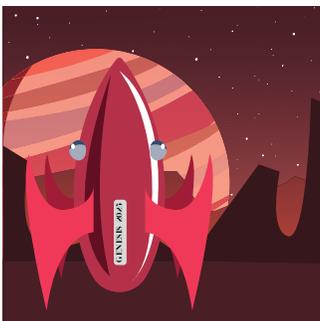
He was an Artificial Atmosphere Tech. He was working at the Southern Pole Colony when his Oxygen generator exploded. My mother remarried that same year. I grew up most of my life with my younger stepbrother Jason Thomas. Jason is 19 and he has always been there when I needed him the most. We both go to Olympos Mons University (OMU) Named after the tallest mountain in the Solar system. We both work as delivery drivers for Martian Burger along with some friends from college.



CHAPTER 1

It was last Friday when I saw an old friend from high school (Ben). We started talking about the first spaceship that took humans to Mars, and how it would be super cool to go check it out. The next day Ben and I waited for Jason to return from cello practice. When he got home we quickly talked him into sneaking in to explore the old spaceship. We put on our EMUs (Extravehicular Mobility Units). They are basically just space suits with a fancy name. We then went to the transfer station and rented three hover bikes. It took about an hour but we finally got to the space yard where all the old rocket ships were dumped. It only took a couple of minutes before I saw Genesis 2025 in bold black letters on the side of one of the ships.

I knew right away that this was the ship that my parents came to Mars on. I immediately became curious about their voyage to Mars, and all their experiences along the way. We finally left the space yard but I couldn't stop thinking about space travel and earth. The next day I decided to call my mom. I asked her if she would do it all over again? She said it was the greatest experience of her life. She was both scared and excited at the same time. I decided right then and there I was going to find a way to get to Earth. Later that night I saw a commercial on tv about a spaceship called the E1, the latest technology in interplanetary travel.



At that moment I thought of an utterly stupid and absolutely dangerous idea. I decided I was going to steal a spaceship. The next morning I immediately started calling my friends and telling them about my idea. All of them instantly started criticizing my Idea and telling me it's a bad idea, except Mia. Mia and I have been friends since sophomore year of high school. When she first heard my plan she bursted out in laughter and said...

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..."Only you would think of something like this." But when I started to explain to her in detail how we would do it she simply said "LETS GO!" The plan was simple. Mia, Jason, and I would spend a month of studying, spending every waking hour learning the ships controls. Then we would steal the ship the night before they launch.

A month goes by quickly when you're plotting to steal a spaceship, but we felt confident. When we made it to the launch site the guards on the east and west post were in the middle of shift change just as we expected. We snuck past the guard posts, across the air strip over to the launch tower. As I looked up at the tall dark tower I saw it. The E1 was breathtaking in person. We climbed the tower and boarded the ship. When I sat in the quarterdeck I finally felt that feeling my mother said she felt when she came to Mars. We all used are knowledged we gathered from the past month to launch this thing. The ship started shaking. I had butterflies in my stomach and probably so did Mia and Jason. We proceeded to lift off.

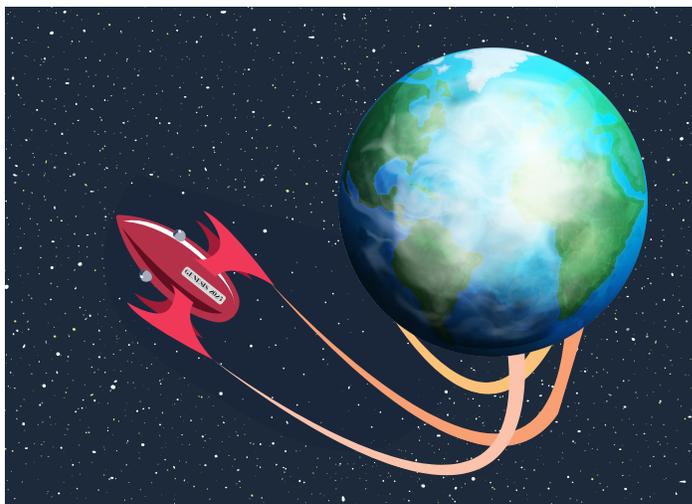
CHAPTER 2

It took approximately two months before we got there. My jaw dropped when I saw the great blue orb with its turquoise oceans. As we got closer I could see the water glitter in the sunset. When we landed, which I'm glad we did because it wasn't easy, we immediately ran outside. We were all frozen in shock standing there on the surface of Earth. It was silent. All we could hear was what they call nature. We were so happy we couldn't contain laughter. We jumped up and down in excitement.

"Yesssssss!" I cried out. We ventured about 6 miles out until we ran into a small village. We were searching the village when out of nowhere a tall man jumped out of the shadows and scared us half to death. The man said his name was Jonathan. We asked him if he was the only one on Earth. He said "I'm not sure?" After about a month of him showing us everything about Earth we decided to head back because we were sure our parents were worried about us. It wasn't easy, especially since we loved Earth so much. Before leaving Earth we insisted that Jonathan come with us to Mars but he decided to stay.

Before leaving Earth we insisted that Jonathan come with us to Mars but he decided to stay.

We wished him goodbye and thanked him for everything he had done for us. We jumped into the ship and proceeded to lift off. After a long adventure we were finally heading back to Mars, back to our family.



STELLA

by Jayma Moses

Greetings, people of Cecil! The selection ceremony will be held today in the glass house at 2:30 today! The announcement over the speakers stopped, leaving a dreary silence.

Everyone in the town of Cecil was nervously working, dreading the next hours to come...except Otto. After all, he was the one who held the selection ceremony. And if you were a disposable resident, you might get replaced. Otto never had to worry about getting replaced. Even though he was 142 years old and couldn't go anywhere without his trusty oxygen tank and heart-pumping tube, he had nothing to worry about.

"Father?" A voice said from behind where he was sitting. "You are wanted in the glass house in 10 minutes for the selection ceremony."

"I'll be there momentarily," Otto responded. "Aren't you supposed to be there yourself, Stella?"

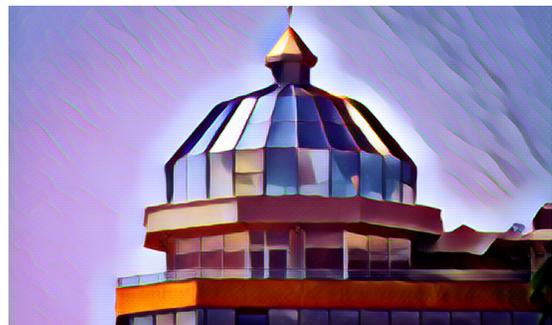
A head poked out behind a wooden door. "Yes, father, I am. I just needed to ask you a question."

"Come here Stella," Otto said, his pale blue eyes filling with a blurry rage. Stella walked over.

"You know you aren't supposed to be up here." Otto picked up his cane and in one fell swoop hit her across her face. He sighed, "And, you know I don't like questions. Go before someone notices you're missing."

Stella clenched her jaw, her cheek dripping with the sweet sting of fresh blood. The sound of cellos playing mockingly in the background as she whispered. "Yes, Father..."

When she arrived at the glass house it was packed with people. Guards wearing bright turquoise armor placed at every entrance. She ran along the rows of people, red splattering on her green glitter dress. She took the winding stairs up to the highest tower, all the way to the podium where she was supposed to be sitting. Then the fluorescent lights finally dimmed and the crowds silenced.



A loud booming voice echoed through the building and a God-like figure erupted from the glass dome ceiling. It was a golden eye that was placed in the center of a silver triangle with arms shooting out of its sides. Everyone in the room went down on their knees and bowed, eyes squeezed shut.

"The selection ceremony has begun and those who are unworthy of being a citizen in Cecil will be banished to the outside world," The eye boomed. Even the mention of the outside world made the crowd uneasy. As the eye went silent, so did the crowd. They were all waiting for the moment when the fate of a citizen would be dictated in just one sentence. A couple seconds passed and then-*"Marissa Wagner!"* The eye boomed. *"YOU were caught trying to bribe the guards into letting you into the vaults! YOU will be banished from Cecil!"*

A shriek came from someone in the crowd. Two guards grabbed a flailing figure. It was a woman, about 80 years old, begging for her life. Stella flinched, she couldn't look at the woman, the rage...

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STELLA- CONTINUED

...and regret painted on her face disappeared under a cloth tied by the guards. Her body fell limp like a rag doll. Every time a name was called, Stella braced herself. She looked up at the all-knowing golden eye with a look of blistering hatred. When you were banished you were thrown into a pit somewhere in the outside world. You were then replaced with a new outstanding model citizen. And if you were to escape the pit, the world was infected with a plague making it almost impossible to survive.. Even her own step brother was banished, she didn't want to know what happened to him.

She needed to do something... anything. She got up from her throne and slipped behind the velvet curtain. She walked past many doors before stopping at a flashing DO NO ENTER sign. She pulled the door open, cool air blowing across Stella's face. Lightness faded as the door slammed shut. The room was empty and dark, except for a flashing light from somewhere in the distance. She followed that light until she turned a sharp corner. Mountains of electrical cords hung from every surface, only leaving a small path where you could barely walk. And right in the center, someone was sitting, murmuring words into a microphone, pressing countless buttons and levers. "Hey!!" she yelled over the buzzing of the machinery. The person turned around. It was Otto, her father.

"Stella? What are you doing here? You know that you aren't supposed to be." he barked.

"This is completely unfair! How dare you do this to these poor people. You are lying to them!" She yelled. She bent down and grasped a cord that was plugged into the wall.

"Don't you dare do this, Stella!" Otto demanded, his straw-like hair plastered to his greasy forehead. "You have to do what I say!"

Stella touched her cheek leaving her hand stained red. "No." The shock on his face gave her all the satisfaction she needed. She smiled and ripped the plug from the socket.

The whirring from the machinery stopped and the lights flickered. The eye that was once glowing gold fell limp and the loud booming voice cut off. The crowd gasped. The eye hung dull, with sparkles flying. The crowd looked at the eye, many of them shouting in confusion. Stella stalked over to where

Otto was sitting, he was so close to the edge. He was a raisin of an old man, with countless wires poking out of various places, his eyes staring. "You have been unfair to me and the people of Cecil! And you have been alive for way too long..." Stella said over the confused shouts of the crowd, her heart racing. She placed her foot on his seat. The chair creaked under her weight rocking back and forth.

"Stella!" Otto begged, reaching out and clutching her wrist. Ripping his clammy, bony fingers off of herself, she smiled.

"Goodbye father..."

Stella pushed, letting his pale blue eyes fall into the swallowing darkness.



REDWOOD'S RIDICULOUSLY SHORT SEARCH FOR THE MISSING STEPBROTHER

story and art by Ella Piña

Chapter One

One lively sunny morning in Redwood Forest, a mighty, black, female panther leaps from a Redwood tree, landing silently and firm. She sprints away, her enormous paws pounding on the ground. She leaps over narrow crystal clear creeks filled with fish that glitter in the sunlight.

She passes a small round bush and slows~ down as a little American Red Squirrel scurries in her way, "Morning' Asraylin. How you doin' today?" He talks in a rapidly mild tone with a western accent.

Asraylin comes to a complete stop and nods at the squirrel, "Fine, thank you. And what about you, Ragriel?"

Ragriel scurries on closer to Asraylin, "Well I'm mighty fine, thank you." He holds out his small paws and reveals two conifer cones, one in each hand, "Just out collection' my breakfast" He nibbles on a cone and shakes his head, "Mm, Mm, Mm! These cones are mighty good. They contain some of the most delicious seed I ever tasted." He thrusts one toward Asraylin, "Care to have one?"

Asraylin looks at the cone for some time before finally receiving it. "Thank you." She replies, the cone gripped tightly in her jaws.

She was about to be on her way when Ragriel planted a paw on her forearm, "Oh and one more thing," He whispers, "Did you hear? Rumors are going around that Zarek's stepbrother, Melian, is alive somewhere outside of Borrowdale's borders."

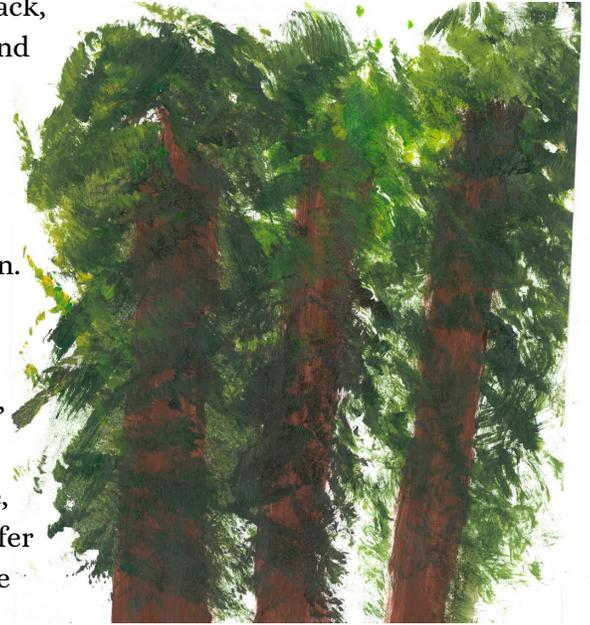
Zarek is a skilled fighter and one of Asraylin's most loyal friends. He lost his stepbrother, Melian, in one of Borrowdale's worst battles two years ago. Or so it was said. Since then, he encountered Redwood Forest and became close friends with Asraylin and has become one of the most entrusted beings in all of Redwood Forest. He is an averaged sized boy around the age of seventeen who is surprisingly strong for his size. He has shaggy, uncut black hair and intense brown eyes. His sun-tanned skin is scarred from the many battles he's encountered.

Asraylin's eyes go wide at this comment, "Really?" Her expression changed to annoyance, "Wait, who told you that?"

Ragriel fidgeted with his conifer cones, "Umm, actually, Teego did.

Teego, a gullible, little Spider Monkey loves to listen to everybody's conversations and once he hears anything interesting, he hurries to find somebody to tell.

Ragriel goes on, "But he didn't hear it on his own. Trust me. He even told me himself. He told me that he was swinging around in the trees and he saw Fada the eagle flying above him screeching...



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REDWOOD'S RIDICULOUSLY SHORT SEARCH- CONTINUED

...'Melian! Melian!' so he came and told me and that's when I came and told you!" Asraylin dropped the conifer cone, "Ragriel, call Teego, Zarek, and Fada. It looks like we have a mission. A mission to find Zarek's missing stepbrother."

Chapter Two

After a whole explanation of what was going on and a few hours of preparing for their journey, Zarek, Teego, Asraylin, Ragriel and Fada set out on their expedition to find Zarek's stepbrother, Melian. They were walking on Kiddle Plains, an empty field that stretched on for miles and miles. Due to Teego's naiveness, Zarek still had a hard time believing Melian was really alive and somewhere out in the world. Asraylin comforted Zarek and encouraged him to have faith in the little monkey and to believe in what he heard. Fada, a Stellar's Sea Eagle who had the ability to smell something and determine how long ago somebody had touched it, confirmed that what the monkey had heard and spread around was quite true. She had information that Melian was alive and healthy somewhere out of Borrowdale's borders. She had discovered one of Melian's swords lying on the ground, still fresh with Melian's scent. "But before I could snatch it in my talons, a big gust of wind pushed me back into the sky and after that, I couldn't find the sword lying anywhere!"

Zarek looked thoughtful, "Hmm. It couldn't have disappeared out of nowhere. Maybe somebody ran and got it after the wind blew you."

Fada adjusted her wings, "Maybe."

Zarek rested his chin in his hands, tapping his fingers, "Hey, can you take us where the sword was? I'd like to see something."

They reached the place where Fada had last seen the sword which was in an open plain with tall pine trees in the distance. Fada took Zarek to the exact location she spotted the weapon while the rest of the crew stayed behind. They all watched as Zarek pointed to the ground.

"Maybe he spotted a bug?" Teego commented.

Ragriel scoffed, "A bug? Teego, I mean come on, we're on a serious journey to find Zarek's stepbrother."

Asraylin nodded, "Yes, Teego he's right. Hey by the way, did you bring your mini turquoise cello with you? We could really use it about now." Ragriel stripped the chattering and pointed towards the forest ahead, "Hey look! Over there by the 'normous pine trees!"

Everybody turned to look and saw somebody with a sword similar to the one Fada had explained to everybody, running inside the deep forest. Zarek yelled, "THATS HIM! THATS MELIAN!"

Chapter Three

Everybody turned and heard Zarek screaming and started chasing after the runaway stepbrother. They reached inside the forest and started yelling for Melian. After a while of calling, Melian appeared behind a pine tree.

REDWOOD'S RIDICULOUSLY SHORT SEARCH- CONTINUED



A while later during the night after a warm greeting between the two stepbrothers, back at Redwood Forest, everybody sat around a campfire while Melian explained his whole story about escaping the battle where everybody supposedly thought he died, and hiding out in the woods making himself at home.

Suddenly, Zarek bursts out laughing and everybody looked at him questionably. He explained to them laughing, "That was a ridiculously short search for Melian.

Everybody joined in, shaking their heads and laughing, the lovely sound echoing in the dark, peaceful woods of Redwood Forest.

MIDNIGHT FAIRIES

by Ella Piña



JOURNEY OF KANG

by Wyatt Reesman

The world of Khagar, the amazing world of dragons and ghouls, devils, angels and so many more. Plenty of adventures; this is my story of the adventure of me and my team. "The journey of Kang".

"RUN GET TO THE DUNGEON, THE DRAGONS ARE COMING!! RUN NOW, LEAVE WHILE YOU STILL CAN, THERE'S AT LEAST 20 OF THEM", said a local peasant. The captain yells out, "Soldiers get to your position, arm the cannons, guard the king, and the princes." "Captain the dragons are here!"- said the lieutenant. Thank you Lieutenant, ready aim fire, **(BANG)** Ready aim fire, **(BANG)** their not even phased we need to abandon the castle." said the knight.

The captain scolded the knight, "We never abandon the king. We need to call the trump card and bring him out." "Sir we can't because it's not stable!" said the worried knight. "Do as I say now no matter what! If we don't we can never win!" Yelled the Captain. The knight scoffed and said, "Fine, bring down the cage!" **(BANG)**

"Grrr!!! Why mortal have you awakened me? What do you want from me?" said a mysterious voice. "My dragon king, your rivals are here to kill you," said the Captain. "Hmmm, interesting so they are going to kill me? Fine! Release me from my cage and I shall kill them all", said the king of dragons.

"So that's what happened to the kingdom in the south and of course they won. What do you think of that Kang?" asked Noxs. "I think it's cool." Kang said back. (Knock Knock Knock) "Kang go answer that." yelled Mink. "I'm going I'm going." said Kang annoyed. (Creak) "Who are you?" said Kang, confused. "Hi I'm Echo and this is my stepbrother king." "Hi I'm king" in a faint whisper. "So what do you want?" Scoffed Kang. "We are here to join your team." said Echo, proudly.

"So what can you two do?" Kang questioned. "Well king is a bard, he uses a cello and he distracts them with his glittery cape. I can fight with a sword and shield, and I use my wand as a threat nothing much else that's why it just shoots a turquoise cloth so I can surprise attack them with my hidden blade" said Echo. "Sure you too can join let me introduce you to the gang this is are wizard, Noxs. He uses trickery and lies to scare his enemy but don't underestimate him he knows many curses and spells. This is are archer Mink she can hit an ant from miles away. And this is her animal companion, Quinn. She is a kirin, a wolf that uses electricity. (grrrr) Calm down boy. And I'm Kang, a potion master shape shifter that can shape shift to any animal 3 feet bigger or below my size and we are the collectors of monsters aka bounty hunters." Kang said proudly!

After 3 and a half seasons have passed Since Echo and King joined the team. "Whelp we have been doing good we have collected around 400,000 Dragon scales with help of are new recruits Echo and King. There are really good additions to the team so let's give them a round of applause" Said Kang. (CLAP) (CLAP) (CLAP). "So we got a big bounty on our hands from a giant spider terrorizing the town of Snake head. We will get about 40,000 dragon scales" said Mink, slamming down the bounty paper. "So how big is it?" said Echo "about 50 feet tall so go get ready" said Mink. **"We can't just breeze past you crazy,"** yelled Noxs. "Let's just go, I'm so bored," said Kang. Fine said all except Kang.

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JOURNEY OF KANG- CONTINUED

When they arrive at the cave its full of webs so Noxs uses a fireball to burn all the webs then the spider came to fight it said “so you burn my home to try and kill me let's fight then” so the spider slashed with its leg cutting Echos shield Noxs retaliated with a blindness curse but the spider is immune to curses so he uses fireball but the spider dodged and slashed him so bad that Nox was on the floor bleeding. Then Kang threw a molotov while shape shifting to a giant alligator and lunging for a bite with Quinn the spider gets hit and starts bleeding but is still going while King uses a healing song on Noxs that stops the bleeding and Quinn strikes it with a lightning bolt while Mink shoots an arrow at the spider. The spider uses a web to block the arrow but the lightning hits the spider deploy shocking it and stuns it while noxs uses terraform moving the rocks in the cave to impale the spiders head the spider grabs the spikes and crushes them so kang turns into a lava snake and wraps around the spiders neck so deeply burning it and finally killing it so they turn in the bounty and fights many more monsters.



THE INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF TAARWINS

by Vanessa Sas

The information found in this book was sent to me by my step-brother, Asyi, who is an expert on Taarwins. Many thanks to him.

Before we begin on the history of these magnificent creatures, I feel it is important to give a brief description on what they are. Taarwins have evolved from the almost extinct dragons. They have the elemental powers of dragons yet are smaller and more intelligent than their ancestors. One of the most intelligent of these animals was a taarwin named Coshu who could play the cello. I have been to one of her concerts and I must say they are amazing. I apologize, I may have gotten a bit off topic, but back to the history.



042-63 K.Y.

There were many things of significance that happened from 042-063. One of the most important things that happened in this time was the war between dragons and taarwins. The War of Freedom was a twenty-one-year war between these two creatures. This was caused by the taarwins wanting to create their own kingdom, but the dragons thought that the taarwins were lesser than themselves and should submit to them. A turquoise taarwin called Kellug the Great led the taarwin army, claiming their victory.

067-143 K.Y.

After the tragic death of Kellug in 066, a new ruler, Drakoz, took over. When he first took power, he executed the families of those who were considered a threat to his rule and he implemented a new set of laws. One of these laws was, "All citizens are required to pay 50 percent of their wages to the government". The people were outraged by these new requirements and in the year 129 K.Y, they staged a rebellion against the king. When the original leader was killed in a battle in 137 K.Y., Willipher ta Dle took over. Willipher killed Drakoz in 140 K.Y. by trapping him in ice. For the next three years, the position of king was fought over with Willipher eventually taking the throne.

143-178 K.Y.

When Willipher ta Dle claimed the throne, he changed the laws to what they were before Drakoz. He made the Council of Win, which is something still used in Kheodo. One of the members of this council, Vartz, planned to murder Willipher and take the throne for herself. She was caught in an attempt in 152 K.Y and was sentenced to death. Before they could carry out this sentence, she escaped. She was not found for over twenty years, when she succeeded in assassinating the king. She took the throne marking the beginning of the Age of Darkness.

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THE INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF TAARWINS- CONTINUED

178-431 K.Y.

The Age of Darkness was a terrible time to live in Kheodo. It started with Vartz as she returned to Drakoz's laws. Anyone who didn't live in the kingdom was executed as well as anyone housing these outsiders. Then she cut off trade from the outside world. Thousands of businesses suffered from lack of supplies. She died in 205 K.Y. with her son, Hydrion, taking over. He was worse than his mother. He required that a third of all food produced should be given to the government as taxes.



This caused thousands of deaths due to starvation. Hydrion was executed by his sister, Prymroz, in 297 K.Y., who was just as bad as the previous two rulers. She got rid of the food tax and instead, increased the tax on money. She drove the kingdom to near bankruptcy by creating a castle made of gold. This castle was completed in the year 342 K.Y., a few years before Prymroz died. Her daughter, Kigtshad, inhabited this castle and held a feast with her enemies. She poisoned the food and killed everyone who attended. The murders were eventually traced back to Kigtshad and she was imprisoned for the rest of her life. Foxxgluv, her brother, took over the kingdom in 412 k.y. Foxxgluv began his rule by imprisoning all of the noble families. Because of this, the people revolted against him and succeeded in taking back the kingdom in 431 K.Y.

431-576 K.Y.

After Foxxgluv's death, his daughter, Sunflur, took charge. She reduced the taxes on citizens and un-prisoned any nobles that were still alive. Sunflur melted the golden castle and made it into coins. She then distributed the coins to the people who had their money stolen by the previous rulers. She also reopened the trade routes. Sunflur held a festival on her birthday where she gave presents to the people. After she reinstated the Council of Win, the council and her decided they would have a vote on who the ruler should be after her death. The kingdom flourished under her rule. After her death in 576 K.Y., the council voted that Rosepuff should be the new ruler.

576-741 K.Y.

Rosepuff was also a great ruler. She created peace with multiple kingdoms. The most important thing that happened during her rule was the Elven Battle. The battle started when there were multiple reports of things being stolen. After months of this going on, a couple of taarwins had caught an elf stealing from their land. Rosepuff held a meeting with the Elven King. The king was outraged by her accusation and declared war on the taaiwins. Rosepuff asked the Kokamis for aid in this battle. I participated in this battle and as bad as battles are, the glitter of the taarwin's scales was a magnificent sight. By the end of the fight, the elves surrendered and a peace treaty was signed.

This brings us to the current day. As time goes on, I will add more to this story, but for now, that is all the information I have. If you would like to learn more, I suggest a visit to Kheodo.

Farewell - Krim L. Sozo

ELEMENTAL

by Zia Engle



Elemental
Zia

SCARFACE

by Kaetana Vallejo

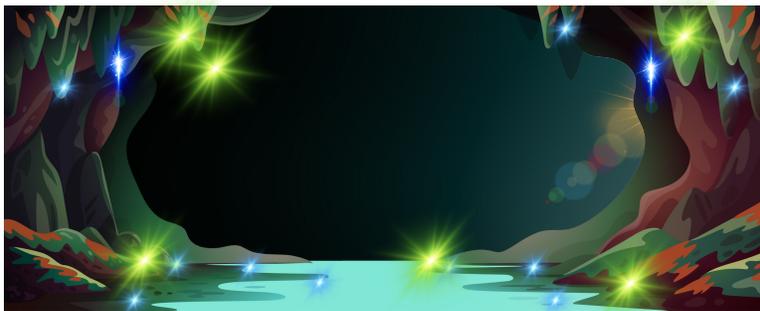
Once upon a time lived a dragon called Scarface. King Oliver, the ruler of the remote Kingdom of Helg, had fought with Scarface ever since he took the throne. Oliver was not civil or courteous and slaughtered anyone who dared to defy him. The King had prepared for tomorrow for years, and it was finally coming. He was to go to Scarface's cavern and exterminate the age-old dragon.

King Oliver acknowledged they would require a brigade, so he assembled all Helg's warriors for a meeting to find some willing to be in his army. He said, "I want all of you in my army. You will get the strongest armor in all the land. Swords, bows, arrows, and more. Your quest is to slay Scarface and bring me back his head. Are you with me?"

"What has Scarface ever done to you?" the group asked. As the King began to get emotional, the commoners looked at each other with puzzled expressions. As he said, "Scarface killed my stepbrother." you could hear the sadness in his voice. The King continued, "Ripped him limb from limb until there was nothing left to bury."

All the men shuddered in fear but one; Tristam. He stood up from the back of the crowd and said, "I volunteer to join your cause, but only if more follow me." Of the two hundred men there, only 19 remained. "If you join my army, I will provide you with a feast of every type of food in all the land." The King could see this offer swayed them. To sweeten the deal he added, "Our doctors will aid any who become wounded during the battle." The townspeople of Helg all shouted hurrah and agreed to join the fight.

It was the most magnificent place anyone from Helg had ever seen. The dark sky carried a fog as thick as tar. As they walked into the stomach of the cave, they all were dumbstruck. The stalactites were dripping a luminous, glowing liquid that splashed into the turquoise pool below. Colorfully spotted salamanders settled like glitter into cracks in the rocks at the sight of the men. "We rest here tonight. We loot and slay Scarface at dawn and leave at noon." Tristam said. They set up camp and dozed off in their tents.



Just as Tristam had requested, they woke at the crack of dawn. As they ventured farther into the cave, the darker it got. The sunlight was slowly fading to nothingness. Once they got to where Scarface was sleeping, they all had full body armor and handled deadly weapons. Once they saw the dragon, all their swords dropped, and so did their hearts. The dragon was a human. All that the soldiers saw was a dirty man covered in rags. He had a great, big musty beard and looked starving. The army picked up their weapons and marched to the twig of a man, fully armed.

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SCARFACE- CONTINUED

This mysterious man looked terrified and shrunk back as if to surrender. Tristam used a booming voice that made the man jump. "Who are you? What are you doing here? Where is the dragon we have come to slay?" The man looked confused. "My name is Eilif," he said. "What is this dragon you speak of?"

All the soldiers looked at each other with puzzled looks. "The dragon that slaughtered the Stepbrother of the King." The man stood, tense. He shrieked. "Oliver! He killed my wife and children. He tried to get rid of me, but I fought! I was no match for his followers, and they drove me to this wretched den!" He threw a rock to the floor, which split open and revealed a shimmering, vibrant core. "Each day, I plot revenge on him and his horrid village!"

This accusation did not shake the men. Tristam stepped up and told the rest of his squad that this old beggar lied and that the King would never do such a thing. Eilif begged them to believe him. As a final attempt, he said in a shaky voice, "Why do you think the King is missing his right ear?" The army tried to think back to the last time they saw the King and remembered. Remarks like "I never put much thought into it?" and "How did that happen?" pierced through the cave as if they were arrows, finally hitting them hard enough for them to see the truth.

Eilif pulled a severed ear from a pouch. Tristam looked at the old man and demanded, "What happened the night you were banished?"

After hearing the whole story, they knew the King was a monster. Tristam, warily, told Eilif that he could join them to overthrow the King. Eilif rejoiced and repetitively agreed, like a woman being asked to marry the man she loves. When they returned to Helg three days later, King Oliver threw a great feast with men playing the cello.

Eilif joined in disguise. Even presented with all the food they could imagine, they were more focused on killing the King. Oliver poured himself a cup of the darkest wine and stood to make a toast. Once everyone was distracted, Tristam drowned the severed ear Eilif gave him into Oliver's wine. At the end of the Kings toast, he took a nice long drink and, on the tip of his tongue felt it. Oliver sprayed his wine across the table and Eilif showed himself, sword in hand.

The King sat in his chair, terrified, and called for his army. As they gathered, Tristam whistled and the men placed their swords at the Kings throat. The King pleaded for them to forgive him and offered riches. Eilif looked at him with a deadlock stare, and told him clearly, "You can't bring them back." The King looked like a child who scraped their knee, shaking with fear and longing for comfort. As the men drove their swords into Oliver's neck, Eilif became the new ruler of Helg.





#ZINE

A DIGITAL PUBLICATION
FOR TWEENS & TEENS

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