

Issue Three  
July 2008

# *The White Quill*

## **A Touch of Color**

I can just imagine you spinning me around, around. The lights dimmed, like it's just us moving together – spinning me around, around. Like you used to do at the park when we were younger; everyone, all the schoolgirls fancied being pushed on the swings – not me – push me around, around. Let's go there now, away from the crowd. Let's go spin, around, around.

# *Index*

Moderator Notes	2
Your Love So Brightly Shinning	3
Spinning Threads	4
The Fear Of Nothing	6
A Chapter from: Jumbles	7
Macaroni Voyeurism on Aisle Two	16

## Moderator Notes

This is the new White Quill format. I understand that it isn't as good as it could be, I have no way of making it better myself seeing as I have limited resources. I am asking those readers who do make graphics to come to my aid and send me new format ideas, any colors or styles you like. This is our community magazine so we should all pitch in and make it the best it can be, but seriously, we need a better one.

This week's cover has been given by Bloody Kisses, an old friend of mine and a good author. She also takes pictures and when I heard this I immediately asked to see. This month's issue, **A Touch of Color** stars happy works and new ideas, giving a touch of color to our world.

BK has also donated the cover writing. Thanks BK, without you, 'A Touch of Color' would never have happened.

As a very long finale note, I'm just going to talk a minute about Writersco and promote some very important things and ideas. Every know Writersco is where the writers go, but it's also where the readers go, and to you readers I would like to stress that it's still a writing website, please use your language and not chat speak. It's annoying and bugs the Hell out of most of us.

Secondly is **Tag Writing**. Only maybe a handful will remember the good days of the Gangs of Heaven and Hell and A Seeker of Sun and Star, when writers from all over chipped in a few paragraphs and made a story together in unity. To my discourse those days it seems have long become forgotten. I'm here to say it's not too late. I've begun to restart the tags; a fantasy tag will be up before the end of August, and I hope all of you will join me.

Lastly to those who know me, this issue comes as no surprise. **RATE**. The rating system has been here for who knows how long, use it. Just on a scale from 0-9 rate whatever writing you may have stumbled upon to.

Lastly, a HUGE thanks to the staff (Kuzco and Veltzeh) who take time every month to write a continuing story and an article monthly, well done guys. Remember, the WQ is always looking for staff!

# Your Love So Brightly Shinning

*Look into the distance,  
For a love so brightly shinning.  
In amidst the chaos,  
For a soul who is still calling.*

*Never ending love,  
In a world yet still evolving.  
Grasping for the closeness  
Grasping for your love.*

*Hear the words, you're speaking,  
Dream on dream come true.  
Never ending love you give  
Holding onto you.*

By Font

# Spinning Threads

The weathered woman sat at the old wheel, wood and bones creaked from age as she settled into her comfy chair and placed her foot on the worn wheel peddle. She was blind; grey glazed eyes glanced at gnarled fingers for a moment before she reached out tentatively for the silken threads. She's done this so many times she no longer needed to see, but the brief flashes she got while weaving were still comforting to remind her that she wasn't completely gone from the world outside.

She stroked the winding pattern of the last night's work, strange lives were lived these days; more lives were being intertwined than ever. She knew she could keep track however, eternity was such a long time to spend weaving compared to those short human lives. For the first time in a long while she actually laughed; she talked about other people's lives as if she was not one of them anymore. It had taken longer than expected but she was starting to think herself more than human... Her finger plucked a string lightly and the image of that moment shone in her mind; a mother holding her child and laughing in joy. Perhaps... perhaps she actually thought herself less than human. Still, be gone these weary woman thoughts for she had a job to do; it was a job of a life time, a job of a million life times. Now where did she leave off? She was grateful that her touch was still attached to her body, without it she would be lost in the dark; soon she found the join with the wheel and the strands spreading out into the weave around her. Her foot began to work automatically, the smooth grove in the wooden panel fitting perfectly with her hardened heels; she remembered those calluses and corns from the first few months. She hadn't been able to walk away from the wheel, but then again her clumsy hands back then had meant she'd needed to re-twine the threads

again and again. Her hands were moving without her prompting them to even as she thought of the past; talking of time she concentrated on the pattern.

Images flashed threw her mind's eye as the almost liquid streams of time passed beneath her fingers; lives and loves flashed into her brain as her skilled fingers twisted the thin wires around each other and criss-crossed them in a massive pattern where lives met. It was so difficult these days, her hands were skilled but humans had found so many interesting ways to stay in contact at the most inconvenient moment. A birth was usually a joyous occasion for the withered woman, a wry smile crossing her lips but these days a frown came to her brow in concentration as she wormed the different lives into each other. Damn phones, a letter could take weeks to arrive but twenty lives could be brought together in an hour because of those damn shrill things. As she intertwined the lives of several people getting on a bus she went back to her inner thoughts; she was watching the way lives followed the pattern every few decades. She wondered what the tapestry looked like by now, it must be beautiful but chaotic, at least if it mirrored lif-. Another thread had suddenly joined those on a bus and several of those on the bus had been cut short.

Damn; she stopped the wheel and it clattered into silence, concentrating again she felt the pattern there, it had been an accident and several people had been ended so quickly. She paused for a moment, staring with her sightless eyes at the pattern around her. A lifetime watching other people's lives start and snuff out so quickly... Sometimes she got so attached to a person she cried when they disappeared from the planet; sighing to herself she straightened her back with another deep groan. She had to do what she had to do though... With a small rattle of time being woven together the old woman began to go back to work again, sitting there for eternity and watching life from the outside. It was lonely... but someone had to keep time going in a straight line.

By Evolution X

# The Fear of Nothing

*Fear courses through my veins  
I'm running  
Still running  
Cramp all over  
I've been running for so long  
From what?  
I know not  
Just running  
Running  
No looking back  
No need to look  
The fear of nothing keeps me going  
I'll just run forever*

*I stopped  
The fear is rising  
I try to start again  
No movement  
Nothing  
I struggle against the air  
The struggle to mover  
There's nothing there  
Nothing there  
The fear is near braking point  
There's nothing there  
Nothing there  
I can't move.*

By Auroralumos

A chapter from:

# Jumbles

Nervous pacing had led her astray in a town where she didn't even know where she was in the first place. The buildings were small and close together, all a stale off grey with large neon lights in varying languages, though none of them she could speak. Her heels clicked against the hard cobblestone road and occasionally caused a splash when she didn't look where she was stepping.

Her heart began to pound faster and faster until the buildings abruptly ended. She was at the edge of town, the road continued on however into a large golden field of wheat. She took a deep breath. Sighing, she cursed. There had been no one in the town, and there was no one in the field either.

Suddenly she heard a giggle, high pitched and childish. She turned to see the road was clear except for a small green ball. There was more giggling and a large pink ball came bouncing down near her. The ball's forward motion stopped right in front of her and simply bounced.

"Um..." She quickly bit on her right thumb's nail, a habit she formed going through different schools. She put it down and turned around walking quickly; she took a few steps out on to the path in the field and yelled. "Hello? Anybody?"

Her breath was fast and hard, her chest rising anxiously. Walking back her heels still clicking against the tiles she looked as now three balls were bouncing. The green ball had joined the pink ball and now there was a yellow ball with a bow. Watching the balls they slowly began to bounce higher and higher and higher till they were bouncing at here eye level.

There was a click sound behind them, a sound like heels, just like her. She tried to move around the balls; the balls just bounced in her way, going which every way she was going. The giggling continued as a figure approached with blazing red hair and a tall lean body. The figure stopped, she couldn't see any of the other features, but she knew it was a man.

"Hello! I think I got lost and... These stupid balls keep bouncing in my way." She pleaded in a desperate attempt to regain her sanity.

The balls stopped once they hit the ground again and rolled a little bit away, the green going left, the pink going straight, and the yellow with the bow right. Abruptly the pink popped up and grew legs and eyes with a large beak-like mouth. "If you wanted by you should have said something sooner!"



The green ball did the same and jumped on top. However, his eyes were different shaped, more of an oval as the pink had rectangles.

“Actually, we just wanted to see if you were lost, but all you did was keep walking away making it hard for us to catch up to you!”

The yellow dove into the air and grew legs and landed then sprouted the beak-like mouth and two huge circle eyes with heavy make-up. “And honey, we’re not balls, we’re Jumbles. Anyone can see that.”

They all giggled and the figure approached closer and stopped next to the tower of Jumbles smiling. She saw him now unmistakably and was taken aback. She was so frightened and perplexed by this man she saw, she ran out into the field.

The yellow Jumble turned towards him and smiled. “You’ve never had a way with the ladies, eh?”

“Better go get her, Roth before she finds her way to N-Town.” The green Jumble added.

“I know, I know.” Roth said, his strong eyes easily seeing her move along the winding path. He slowly began going forward, dragging his feet in the geta, the simple wood shoes given to him. He adjusted the heavy red cloth banner he wore, half draping in front from the waist to just above his feet with a large V at the bottom, the same in back. His shirt was open so that he could feel the breeze as it crept in from the coast, but he was still upset that sleeves couldn’t be tied up farther. Roth sighed and knelt down to roll up his pants. Tying them off he stretched his neck and vanished.

“He’s going to make an excellent god of death.” The yellow said to the green. The green turned to the pink who looked up at him saddened.

“You two do know how she is right?” The green and the yellow shook slightly. “Nope.” They said in unison. The pink jumble sighed and looked out as Roth appeared in front of the girl who fell over.

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“I’m very upset that you’re here.” Roth said looking her in the face, the almost same face he had just wider. He gracefully bent over and grabbed her arm lifting her off the ground and setting her down gently on her feet. He bit his lips and looked down towards the ground. “What happened or do you not know, Circe?”

She looked back at him with one eye, her other covered by a heavily sprayed chunk of hair she had let do to one of the new punk fashions. She still stood somewhat confused but found some part of her brain still able to communicate. “You just poofed... Out of thin air.”

“What happened?” He yelled and Circe fully woke up to realize that her brother, gone for the past five years, was yelling at her just like he did back then. “Circe?”

“I... what happened to you. I just appeared here, but apparently you know where the hell you are.” She responded using her new found

confidence. Circe, although younger than her brother by eight years, had always been a bit quite until he disappeared when she picked up the noise he usually caused around the house.

“You finally got a voice. You tell me the last thing you were doing before you appeared here. If you do that, then maybe I’ll tell you where you are.” Strongly he order her and she crossed her arms.

“I was driving through the mountains in Philadelphia.”

“You crashed.” He asked and slapped his forehead leaving a giant red hand print. “The bend right after the mile marker and the exit sign where you can’t see the bottom of the valley?”

“I crashed? Wait,” She said reviewing the words in her head. “How do you know the area?”

“That’s where I crashed my car! Don’t tell me that haven’t found my body yet?” He said loosing the calm and cool he had before and acting like a worried big brother. She made a weird ‘uh-oh’ styled face and whistled. “They haven’t... Damn! I’m never going to get buried!”

“So... You’re dead.” Roth nodded and placed a hand on her looking her in the eye, he nodded towards her. “And I’m dead?”

“Yes. Let’s get back to town, I think you need to apologize to the Jumbles, sounds like you were rude as usual.”

“What? I’m not usually rude!” She began yelling and hit him upside the head. Roth just kept on walking as Circe followed yelling at him until she ran out of things to say. “Oh, by the way, where are we?”

“Well, that is V-town.” He turned slightly still walking and pointed down the path. “That way is N-Town. These are the Fields; people stray from the path and get lost for centuries, which is why the Jumbles approached you before you went in there.”

“Jumbles? Those ball things with faces and feet?” She said making a strange ball like shape which Roth didn’t even see.

“Yes.” He answered carefully and stopped looking out over the fields as a large black cloud was approaching them over the horizon. “Circe! Run!” He said moved his hands carefully straight down. He grabbed the air and two silver swords, plain; straight with red handle grew in his hands.

Back in town where she was running the Jumbles had begun to start bouncing up and down. “Run! Hurry! It’ll catch you!” They yelled at the same time. Circle got there and the Jumbles jumped down and began running on their feet; she stopped to catch her breath and kept running after the small creatures. They maneuvered right and she turned and followed carefully, her heels making her slid a bit. She crashed into a building and hit her head on the cobblestone below.

Another man jumped down next to her and picked her up, disappearing just as the Jumbles looked behind them. “She’s gone! She’s gone!”

“Phi!” The man with the golden eyes yelled as he slowly appeared in the small hallway with Circe in his hands. He set her down on the floor and brushed the large lock of hair out of her eye. “There’s no doubt.”

“What Master Nathaniel?” A large blue Jumble said running into the room. She stopped right next to Circe and smiled. “Aw, this must be Master Roth’s sister? Poor child dead, and then she’s unconscious to boot!”

“Get the smelling salts.” Nathaniel pulled her up some sitting her against the wall. Phi ran quickly out of the hall way and he heard sounds of pans and books slamming every where. He knelt down somewhat in front and on the side to her string at her. “A girl... the first girl in four hundred years. This is strange.”

Phi came running back into the hall way and dropped the smelling salts from her mouth onto the floor. She walked over to Circe as Nathaniel uncorked the bottle and slowly waved it under her nose. “Is she going to be alright?”

“Fine, nothing can kill you once your dead, remember? Why’s this not working?” He said and pulled the bottle back and looked at it. He picked up the cork shoving it back into the bottle and set it down on the floor. “Phi, this is Soy Sauce.”

Phi looked down at the bottle and smiled. “Whoops. My bad. I’ll go get the bottle.” Phi said and jumped turning into a ball and rolled away into the kitchen. After more rummaging the ball emerged and the bottle was spit into the air. Nathaniel caught it and read the label. “Thank you, Phi. Why don’t you go get dinner ready?”

“Alright.” The ball said quickly growing a mouth and bouncing away. He rolled his eyes and screwed off the lid. He sniffed it quickly and moved it away.

“If you wake up from this, I apologize for the smell.” He shoved it under her nose and with in a couple seconds she woke up and covered her nose and mouth. He pulled the bottle away and put the lid back on. “You are Circe, sister of Roth correct?”

“Um, yeah. Hey, you’re in the same funny clothes.” She said and Nathaniel stood up and offered a hand to her. “Are you guys in a club or something?”

“It used to be called a fraternity, but we’ll have to change that now.” Nathaniel said. “If you go into the kitchen, Phi will feed you. I’m off to help Roth.” He disappeared from sight quickly.

She stomped her foot. “Why does everyone poof from place to place!”

“It’s not poofing, they move quickly.” Said a strong feminine voice from the kitchen after a large bang. She walked in and saw a young woman with pure white skin and hair in a simple plain dress that covered everything. “Hello, I’m Phi.”

She turned her face which was obviously had paint on it. She walked over and touched the girl on the forehead. Phi pulled her hand away and grabbed a pot from the cupboard and put it in the sink. The delicate white hand turned the faucet and water began to slowly dribble into the pan.

“Are you... Were you human?” Phi shook her head sending her thin hairs flying.

“I’m a Jumble, created by the Death Gods to help new Death Gods who linger here. I was created by the Goddess Phiona, therefore, my name is Phi.” She said and suddenly was made into a small blue ball on the floor. That bounced until Phi grew legs and a face. She quickly jumped and landed on tip of her toeless left foot. “Ta-Da!”

“Why can’t you stay as the lady?” Circe asked and Phi landed on her other foot and sat down, tipping her feet to and fro. “It’s weird seeing you as her then as the ball.”

“Well, if they saw that I was in that form, they would attack. It’s offensive to be found in human-like form.” Phi said as she leapt up and turned off the faucet with a foot. “It’s kind of why I was nervous when you walked in. Certain things are easier in human-like form.”

Circe grabbed the pot from the sink and placed it on the stove. “Boiling water, right?”

“Yep. Don’t worry though, I have it. New members don’t help with house work, Hell, old members don’t help either. Can I be frank with you?”

“Yeah I guess. If you let me help.”

“That’s not a hard bargain but alright. Jumbles here is another word for slave. And the strangest thing,” she said vaulting on the stove and pressing the buttons with the frame of her foot, “we don’t mind at all. Give us something to do; after all, with you here there are only five new Death Gods.” Phi jumped down and went over to the fridge and bounced for a second.

“Do you need help, Phi?”

“No thank, sugar, watch.” Phi sprouted an arm on a bounce on opened the fridge. She bounced again and grabbed a bag of carrots. Landing she turned and began walking over and lifted up the bag and entire two feet of her extended height. “Cut these for me would you?”

“Sure.” Circe said pulling them out and washing them in the sink.

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“Is that the last of them?” Roth said picking up the slain body of the small Imp, large red wings with a tiny body like a demonic baby, the skin red with scorched black scab-like patches. “Disgusting creatures.”

“Throw it.” Nathaniel said sticking his scythe into the ground and pulling back his long black hair so he can see clearly. He stuck out an



open hand and waited. "Pull." The corpse of the creature was thrown high into the sky and Nathaniel pulled back his hand. "Wind!"

Lurching his hand forward a large amount of wind rushed past them and hit the creature slicing him into pieces. "Get one; I want to practice my Water since these bastards are Fire."

"A real death God can kill Fire with Fire." Nathaniel picked up a body and began swinging it over his head by the tip of the wing. "Say when, Roth."

"Pull!" Roth moved his hand out smoothly as the creature was flung. "Water!" A shimmering coat condensed around the creature and dissolved with the body.

"Acidic?"

"Yep." Nathaniel smiled happily and picked up his sword. "You're sister's at the house. I gave her to Phi to handle."

"Oh, you took her?" He nodded and picked up his sword. It dissolved. "Hey, Nathaniel..." Nathaniel was gone leaving Roth in the middle of a circle of dead Imps. "... I take it you do like her than." He picked up his swords and dissolved them. "Earth!"

Roth vanished as mounds of dirt sprang up leaving the wheat on top. It crushed down on the corpses, consuming them. The dirt and cobblestones slowly moved back to their places as the earth kept bearing down until there was no sign of a burial.

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Nathaniel did his favorite thing in the world when he got home, he pinned someone to the wall, that someone was Circe. She was held up against the hallway, Nathaniel having a hand planted on the wall next to her head. She glared at him. "Scaring me... Not funny."

"I wasn't thinking funny..." He said leaning in until he was thrown down the hallway.

"Nathaniel! If you ever do that again I'll rip off your arms." Roth said appearing with a hand held out. Roth stretched his neck and smiled again regain his normal happy composure. "Circe, I'm sorry about that, Nathaniel hasn't really been around a girl in a long while."

"400 years." He growled angrily. "Don't do that again, alright, a simple 'off' is more than enough." He stood up and turned around. "Call me when Phi has dinner done."

"Dinner is done." Circe said happily. "She showed me how to bake turkey! Know I can make it any time I want." She said happily looking up at Roth.

"Circe, Phi is supposed to do cooking, we don't."

"Why?" She said putting on her best sass, arms pinned against her hips and everything. "She may not be human but she's sure as hell not a slave. You shouldn't just order her around. It's rude, just like Dad was to

Mom.” Roth stopped and put his head down. “Never thought of it that way did you?”

“Listen, girl, Phi’s been doing it happily for 400 years. She loves it.” Nathaniel said turning around. “Why else do you think she smiles all the time?”

“Because she doesn’t know that there’s anything better she could be doing.” Circe said. “She could be out playing, or visiting other places.”

“Jumbles can’t leave their assigned city unless in human-like form, which is illegal unless order by their god.” Roth said quietly.

“You guys are so oppressive here.” Circe said walking into the kitchen. Phi was hiding under the table; she bent down and picked the shaking ball up. She brought her out and held her up to Roth. “Thank her for all she does for you!”

“Well, I do guess that’s in order. Phi,” he said laying a gentle hand on the ball. “Thank you for working for us Phi!”

“Really? You’re not angry that I taught her how to cook?” The mouth said coming out. Roth shook his head as an eye opened. “Yippee! I have a cooking student!”

Phi said leaving Circes hand and bouncing between the walls faster then they could normally see. Roth stuck out a hand and caught her. “You sure are happy about this.”

“Come on, Phi.” Circe said taking her and holding her out to Nathaniel. “Thank her, please.” Circe said a bit more controlled.

“Phi, thank you for feeding me.” Nathaniel said and walked away. Circe groaned and turned around mouthing ‘what’s with him?’

Roth shrugged and followed Nathaniel. Circe carried Phi in her arms like a child would be sitting and followed them into a large ornate room decorated with large amounts of gold and silver. In the middle there stood a beautifully carved wood table with at least two hundred seats.

“Wow, you eat in this?”

Nathaniel nodded, “we are gods in training after all. Shouldn’t we be treated like gods? You should see the rest of the house if you think this is amazing.” He said and pulled a seat out in the middle of the table. He sat down quietly and bowed his head against his arms he had laid on the table. He began to mutter endlessly to himself. Roth took a seat on the opposite of him and pulled out a paper and quill from inside his shirt and began to write.

“Circe, could you help me carry in plates?” Phi asked looking up, her feet steady coming out. Circe nodded and carried Phi back into the kitchen and set her down on the tale. “Open the window and whistle as loud as you can.”

“The other Jumbles?” Circe asked as she opened it and whistled. It rang through the streets of the city. “Dinner!”

She moved quickly as one by one the three other Jumbles plopped into her midst. Phi walked to the border of the table and addressed them.

"Everyone! This is Circe! She's new and Roth's baby sister! Be extra nice to her, she's helping in the kitchen now!"

"Really? Wow?" Said the green one opening up. The other two followed suit; legs, eyes and mouths. "So, Circe, a new Death God."

"Um, I think. I kind of just showed up." She said kneeling down so they were more her height. "So, my name is Circe, and I like to cook. Who are you all?"

"I'm Lou." The green said point his foot at himself. "I'm the Jumble that trains you. This is Car; she's the one that'll help you with your knowledge of death and your history." The yellow Jumble smiled showing large carnivore like teeth. "Lastly, this is Roe, he's a liaison between the actual Death Gods and yourself. And you know Phi, right?" He asked with a nice warm smile on his face.

"She's the cook?"

"No, she's the mother of the house!" Roe boomed throwing one of his pink feet down. "You must always listen to Phi, she rarely has orders, but when she says them, you must follow!" Roe had squinty eyes and they got worse when he yelled; Circe hope it wouldn't be soon.

"Let's get dinner out!" Phi chimed happily. They slowly picked up plates from the table and began taking them out, "get the dinner plates from the cupboard above the sink, would you dear?"

"Sure." Circe stood up and carefully glided over to the cupboard and began taking plates out, "how many?"

"Seven, four for Jumbles, three for Gods." She said and used her arms to grab the turkey they had poured so much work into and easily jumped down and began out into the dining room. "Silverware too!"

"Alright!" Circe cheered while set the heavy gold plates down on the marble counter. She began opening drawers until she found a drawer that was full of gold forks. "This is gold-ware, not silverware... Oh well."

She dragged out seven forks, looked in the next draw the was full to the brim of shimmering gold spoons, and the draw after that filled with shining gold knives and counted out seven each laying the pile on the plates. Circe admired the shinning pieces for a second and than finally picked them up. She nearly dropped the plates as they were so heavy now with the utensils on top. She carefully made her way into the soft carpeted area of the hallway and drudged another few steps into the dining room to set the plates at the end of the table, sliding them down to the middle where the food was being set.

"Do you need help?" Nathaniel said rising and meeting her down near the end of the table. He easily lifted the plates and held them out, "I'll do the plates if you set the ware." Circe reached out and took the bunch, "Also, the Jumbles don't use ware."

She set down three of each: three forks, three knives, and three spoons. She picked up the rest and headed back to the small comfortable kitchen and put them back. When she closed the last of the drawers she looked up to see Nathaniel standing next to her, staring. "I'm Nathaniel."

He held out his left hand and she looked at it and stuck out her left hand shaking it. "You're left handed?" He nodded quickly. "I'm Circe."

"I'm sorry I pinned you against the wall earlier, but next time, you should be able to hit me off." He turned to the cupboards and opened the one above the stove. "We drink from these chalices," he pulled out three beautifully shaped crystal cups. "The Jumbles drink from the gold bowls." He grabbed those too.

"Why are you helping? I thought they were supposed to do everything?" He looked down and handed her the bowls to carry. "Well?"

"I've been here for six hundred and twenty-three years playing Death God. You made me feel human again." He simply walked, the banner flapping behind his step. The Jumble's had gathered on the table and were looking at him. "What?"

"Nothing!" They yelled in unison and quickly took their seats.

By Ash... Which is me, yup, I wrote this. A little bit about myself, I've just turn 18 and I am going to a local college to study cancer and the effects of radiation on it. I live in America where I enjoy the best Mexican cuisine you can get outside of Mexico. I'm a relative goof ball that's so chaotic I love order, that's about it.



# Macaroni Voyeurism on Isle Two

I don't farm.

A lack of agricultural opportunity on my part cannot be blamed for it; after all, if one had a mind to believe the rumors one might believe that only about two percent of Americans work to grow all of the nation's domestic food. I am positive that one more member of that illustrious group would not hurt matters in the least. No, the opportunity to till the soil has presented itself from time to time with a persistence so steadfast that, if said opportunity was instead a soldier of some sort, it would almost certainly have earned a medal. I couldn't hold a grudge against it for trying so hard, anyway, which seems like a better deal for the opportunity. I can't imagine that an intangible concept has much use for a medal, especially without a neck from which to hang it or a chest to which it might be pinned.

Of course, considering my exceptionally limited talents in the field of vegetation, my abstinence from farming might be doing a favor to farming in general.

A logical reader, at this point, is not wondering where I, as a conscientious non-farmer, acquire my food. In the modern United States just about every person of reasonable intelligence possesses a full awareness of the grocery store, a complicated Utopia of value-priced bargains and discount goods interwoven with sneaky strands of highway robbery. We tolerate endless check-out lines, the scent of cleaning solution, hassling customers, and the occasional ridiculous price all in the name of convenience - honestly, who has time to grow his own food anymore?

For me, the grocery store is all about building blocks. I tend to go into a grocery store, rejecting the idea of taking a shopping cart as I am all but positive I won't need it, and end up wandering the colorful aisles in search of that elusive 'new meal idea'. Since I am the unofficial head cook when I have the occasion to go home, it is my unsworn duty to devise all sorts of culinary disasters to which I then subject my family. Generally, this entails aisle-hunting until some particular item catches my eye and sparks the tinder of meal-creation.

And so, once I have made the obligatory walk back to the front of the store in search of a cart, I return to my aisle-perusal. I think it must be said that, in addition to being a dedicated non-farmer, I am first and foremost a pasta chef. In a reversal of what seems to be typical grocery store policy, one can generally locate boxes of noodles within a reasonable proximity to the shelves containing jars of so-called 'spaghetti sauce'. I understand that spaghetti owns a respected place as one of the easiest of all meals to cook at home, and I suppose that is why such tomato sauce is known by that name - despite its versatility. Still, I would hate to see that trend applied to other foods. 'Soup Celery' and 'Peanut Butter Sandwich Bread' would not be any higher on my list of ingredients for it.

As far as labeling goes, I would like to stretch just a bit and tell you that I equate jars of spaghetti sauce with politicians. My first thought for this aspect of the discussion was a simple dig at them; however, comparing politicians and spaghetti sauce by saying 'both are cheap and plentiful' seems too easy and generalized a jab. That being said, I tend to see the different brands of sauce, from generic store brands to 'secret recipe from the shores of Italy' brands in fancy glass jars that hold less sauce and cost more money, as different political parties.

Of course, the generic brands are third parties, the sort of political groups that most people only acknowledge in passing. They are only an option for those who cannot stomach the pricier brands. The middle brands, whose labels invariably display whole cloves of garlic, tomatoes, or peppers as the particular flavor entails, are almost certainly Democrats. Reasonably priced, whose flamboyant labels promise a great deal more than the sauce can actually deliver, these dwellers of the plastic safety jar fit the budget of most of middle America just fine. And of course, the overpriced, underfilled sauces, with their promises of secret recipes and unique spices from around the world, are Republican.

The most interesting tie-in to this discussion of jar labels is that, beneath the colorful exterior and promises, all three types of sauce are essentially the same. A smart, budget-minded chef can spice even the most unspectacular off-brand sauce until its flavor equals or surpasses that of its expensive peers. The same could be said for third party candidates, though I imagine they aren't quite as tasty as actual sauce in lasagna.

The next stop in my search through pasta pandemonium is, of course, the noodle shelves. I don't know for certain that this has ever occurred to anyone else, but I can't help but wonder why the bulk of non-generic noodle brands feel that it is necessary to build transparent, plastic windows into the face of their boxes. Never have I selected a windowless box of noodles only to put it back upon the shelf thinking, "I'd better not buy this

one. I can't be sure of what's going on in there without seeing for myself." The grocery industry is founded entirely upon the consumer's trust in, and apathy towards, the various companies who package and ship such merchandise. We trust them because, as a general rule, they deliver what they promise. Besides, I have no particular interest in noodle-voyeurism, peeking into boxes of macaroni to satisfy some sort of perverted durum semolina lust at the end of aisle two.

Conversely, I can wholeheartedly understand the packaging transparency of the final primary pasta ingredient - ground beef. Noodles seem to boast a shelf life surpassing that of professional athletes these days. Ground beef, on the other hand, displays visible signs of spoiling within a week at most. The customer, and by that I mean myself, has every right to know if the brown beef should actually be brown instead of pink. There is nothing fancy about that - other than common sense, which I actually see as something of a luxury for people these days.

It's a pity they don't sell common sense at grocery stores, really. Granted, I would almost certainly purchase the bargain common sense for myself and attempt to season it to taste, but certainly some of the people who buy overpriced spaghetti sauce would also purchase name brand common sense. Maybe then, they would know better than to buy it.

By Mister Saint

# How NOT To End A Story

First of all, the question isn't about how to end a story either—it's about failing to end it in the first place! Personally, I have nearer to twenty ongoing stories and I have yet to finish even one of them. When I was a kid and wrote stories for class, I could finish some, but mostly because finishing them was a requirement.

It is certainly possible to force an ending, and it can still be good while forced. The movies, books and comics I could call my favorites are the ones I would usually like to continue forever, but few of them do. I have yet to grasp why exactly stories tend to work better when they're properly finished, and that might be the reason why I never get anything of mine finished either! It is way too interesting to figure out new situations, new plots, new characters and even new worlds in an existing one. Or make up a new one, even, and sprout out a totally new never ending story! Still, I think I've got down some basic issues about ending and never ending storylines.

One popular example of never ending stories are American superhero comics. They just go on and on, even though some have been discontinued and re-continued along the way. The good thing is that the fans will always see their favorite characters in new adventures. The bad thing is that the plots get repetitive and characters in general don't have infinite developing capacity—in addition to (mainstream) superheroes not developing that much in the first place, at least on a short notice. The world and characters might start seeming more than worn out, and that might make the thrill of excitement lessen.

Stories with a definite, set end can leave the reader yearning for more or even confused about everything that's happened. Then again, the writer might have showed the most interesting part of the world, story and character with that one story, and the new ones would probably not be as great anyway.

Is not ending a story a bad idea? Some think so, some don't. Personally, I've come to see that stories with set ends tend to be better as stories—but

then again, too little of a good story makes me annoyed or might even make me write fan fiction. Mixed blessing?

Moreover, there are different endings as well. One might leave everything open while still being an end, while another might go as far as sealing the fate of an entire universe. Killing characters and achieving plot targets are popular endings. Never ending storylines can have ends too, and they usually do: end of an issue, end of a chapter, end of one book out of a series and so on.

In conclusion: how to have a story not end? Not having characters die is a good way, but also killing them while making sure they have interesting offspring, friends and/or enemies works and might even make for a more interesting story. Spin-off-stories work well also. What did the main antagonist do for a living before the protagonist came along and messed it up? What happened to make that amazing natural formation in the place where the story happens? How did the world come to be, anyway? What if things had went a bit different?

# Age of the Hunt: The Bard

By now, you know what kind of a world Age of the Hunt is. A world made completely of hunters, or so most people would have you believe. A world shaped around the honor of a kill and the meaning on how many different strings of hair you carry.

But this will be, yet again, not a tale of a hunter, as was our first one, but the tale of one belonging to another kind of profession. This is the story about Bakio Pitko, the bard.

“Beware the honorable deeds perpetuated by the great hunters, for they might just include your demise! Beware the fine size of their achievements, for they can mean the end of your lives! Hhaahahahah”

Long blue hair, skinny and short, carrying along a wooden guitar, two small hand drums, a flute and a tiny harp; dressed in white rags that involved a sleeveless shirt and trunks. That is the description of the famous bard. He was famous mostly due to one line he sang, very often:

“Alas, few know my name, for many know my skill at running away...they don’t even ask as they wish to put me into the fray aaaand gut me hehehehehe.”

He went, from town to town, telling tales long dead about people long dead and deeds long forgotten that need remembering. He was fast and agile and swift on his thoughts. It started with one man that tried to catch him and failed. A guy dared another to kill the helpless bard and that one also failed. It escalated, his appearance was branded as a worthy kill and so bands went after him, and failed. Traps, ambushes: he foresaw them all, he escaped them all with little else than bruises and superficial cuts.

“And the band was thus named Sabretooths. Born and raised for the purpose of hunting down the greatest preys of all, the greatest hunters of all. For decades, they did so, claiming as their prizes men like the great Makias, the Menace, and Jayce the Heinous. One day they faced the king himself, Jileo the Wise. And against the king, gentlemen, the issue is not the size. They lost half their group and admitted defeat to Jileo’s foot. Their leader, Kakut, is now a humble bartender at the city of Mah’jut.

Moral of the story, don't mess with the king for you WILL be sorry.  
HAHAHAHAHHAHAA”

And this is the tale of his last day. The bard is a traveler, he roams the land recounting stories and histories, facing all who wish to claim him.

This will tell of the day his wits were just not good enough to keep him alive.

“Famed King Kylomi thus took to Africa’s throne, to claim the head of the last human king, and his territory as his own. He did not ambush, he did not trap, he did not cheat like a hoodlum sap; he challenged the queen of Africa to an honorable fight to the death! He fought, he lost... he won with a last swing of his spear: a faithful lunge, a desperate thrust with all his might...he won the mortal combat even though he had lost the fight. And with such a blatant stunt began, officially, the Age of the Hunt.”

It was a normal day. He woke up in the woods, ate his fruit and fish, a little of a cow he had bought under disguise. Put on his instruments and prepared the tale of the day. He was going to sing about the warmonger Vaarshi. A tale of tragedy and death, created by the protagonist but, for bad or worse, it was a tale that deserved to be told.

He went into a small town during daylight, just past midday. Once there, he was already being stared and gazed at by all the transients. Without a moment’s noticed, he got out his harp and played. It was his life calling, his way, his path...to sing and tell:

“It has been decades since the man has made a name for himself. Vaarshi was first seen in battle when he interrupted a group’s attack on a village. They were five, he was one but with a sword lengthening a house, he won. Mohawks, was the name of the group that so fell in one single swoop!”

He played rhythm for a few seconds. He saw as men drew up their knives, nothing special but the usual. 4 behind him, two in front. He would dodge the two in front and keep running whilst telling another tale. He was sure they wouldn’t attack, they never did out of curiosity for the story.

“He proceeded to kill the Pines and the Lions, followed by the Kites and the Ions. He thus achieved a place on the wanted list as well as the title War Monger. His deadly fist had been carried out only against numerical superior enemies and never had he gotten hurt, hit or vanquished. He looked for fights, never ran, never did sneak. He took on larger groups with a grin and made them shriek. Thus the title. Many parties tried to collect and all of them have perished under his heavenly sword, some would say hellish.

To this day, he stays alive, hunting parties and enemies of the like.”

He plucked the last notes, noticing about 5 guys on a rooftop to his left, 4 more to his right. Never before had he faced such a group and that made sense for it wasn't a group but three groups, maybe more. He weighted the odds, the chances, the plans on his little genius head and reached one conclusion. It was time to tell his tale. He grinned as he side-stepped to dodge a spear that was thrown and thrust his body forward while drawing his guitar.

Fortunately, hunters weren't very big on arrows, specially when in so much of an advantage already. They all jumped down or simply followed him. He jumped over the two in front, excited and saying:

"And now a story about a simple boy, that was born on a ranch and raised with music as his toy." He jumped diagonally, evading a sword, landed and jumped again wall walking and climbing unto the rooftop. "he was also very curious, and loving of stories. Always hearing, desiring to know more and more and MORE! ALL OF IT!!!" He screamed, jumping unto another rooftop. "He started playing guitar, at 6 years of age, singing out loud at 8 years of AGE! With a rooster as a pet and a whole lotta sweat, he'd wake up the entire ranch with tales of the past, wishing for the day where someone would clap their hands." He jumped down into the city's ends, heading for the forest; everyone close behind.

His top speed was decreasing: soon enough, they would catch him.

"And on this one special day, this cute little thing without anything to say, clapped her tiny little hands, making almost no noise, at his high pitched out of tune voice. A tiny little tear went down his tiny blushed cheek and that was the day that life called out to him, demanding him to seek a life where he plays and sings and TELLS LIKE A FREAK!" Entering the tree line, a thrown dagger cut at his side. "Ugh...hehe" Handling the pain, he carried on with his tale. "He would use his limbs to play the most beautiful notes on the world, as he told of the most incredible tales on the globe. He would circle the planet, through all the land: through mountains of snow, through dunes of sand, through deadly peeks and mortal creaks, through savannas and swallowing floors, through them all!" He opened his arms, his left one is sliced by the elbow by a pursuer that had caught up to him. He tripped due to the pain, rolled over on the floor and as the groups circled him, he continued with tears on his eye, blood pouring out of his body, but a steady tone of voice:

"He would not hunt. He would not kill. He would not fall prey or on the innocents have his fill. Life called him to sing and sing he would, till the end."

"I admire you persistence, but you should shut up and say your last words." The apparent leader of his killers told him. The bard looked at



him and smiled. His fate was the same as so many others. As his last words, the bard proclaimed:

“And so the boy grew into a man and evaded great hunters, survived great pursuits. His name is Bakio Pikto, The Bard. Life called him to be an observer. He followed his calling with great fervor and held no regret when with death, he met.” He used his remaining hand to do a melancholic, sad beat on his drum. “for I have done weeeeeelllll \*cough cough\* until this fareweeeelllll.”

The leader of the hunters put his sword at the bard’s neck. He coughed out blood, and got some beats out, still singing, still doing his thing:

“For I am the baaard. I am...the-” And thus was Bakio Pitko’s head claimed by the parties: Wild Foxes, Bunny Hunters, Dead Eyes and Black Barons.

One of the leaders, we do not know whom, retold the tale of the Bard and that is how we know of it today. A man that lived his purpose, mostly seen as useless, to his last breath.

They say that these four groups then formed one sole group by the name of The Hunter’s Guild, later becoming the body guards of the huntress queen and most troubled Jileo’s first attempt at ending this tragedy of ages. They say that a boy, dazzled by the bard’s tales, followed in his footsteps and met with a less tragic end and more fulfilling achievements. They say a very famous hunter gave up his ways, mainly due to one of Bakio’s tales.

They say many things, tell many tales, but this is neither of them. This is the tale about a man who had such a determination to a way of life he had very well identified since child, that he did not hesitate a second of living. A man who was slew during the Age of the Hunt.