

A Return to School

The White Quill - Issue Five

Five Words, an Interview

Haikus from the Staff

The Huntress Queen



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FIVE WORDS, AN INTERVIEW

Can you tell us about Five Words?

Five Words is a contest for which you write a medium sized paragraph containing five assigned words. Participants must connect these random words in one coherent paragraph. Note coherent. Also note paragraph. ;) The contest is judged every month based on the rules (given at [Five Words](#)) and new words are selected by yours truly.

What gave you the idea to start Five Words?

I actually wasn't the founder of Five Words, it was the illustrious [\[Po\]](#). Before Po had her baby, she started searching for someone to take her place as owner of Five Words. I wanted to help and I also thought the contest was kind of nifty, so I decided to be that person. Plus, I wanted to give WC a bit of a jolt at the time. Five Words looked like it hadn't been in action for a while, so it was a good place to start.

You run one of the most successful contests, speaking by participants. How did you get your contest so popular?

Well thank you everyone who participates! I don't think it's

really my ability that made Five Words so popular. Five Words is a really easy contest. All you have to do is spit some little blurb out and make sure five words are in there somewhere (logically of course). Aside from that I try to pick words that are pretty fun and I make sure it's always active. I also put up new badges every now and then, but unfortunately my badges are never much of a hit. I think maybe people just like to keep participating so they can poke fun at my badge attempts. ;P

What would you recommend to others hoping to run contests?

I've run quite a few contests, mostly failures. I think the best way to keep a contest going is to make it CONVENIENT. Realize that writers are lazy. Also realize that WC is still pretty small. Don't waste a creative idea for a contest by making the contest too much work. No matter how much incentive you offer the members of WC, they won't respond if it's too hard. Much much love to WC, but I think we all know how much we love convenience - including me! That said, be creative! People love fresh ideas. Also make your badges VERY nice. Don't even glance at any of the badges I've made. :P Participate in other contests as well. If you participate, those hosts will be encouraged to participate in your contest.

School Tales by Kuzco

Hello, fair readers of the Ezine. I am not one to write beyond my current series, The Age of the Hunt, for I challenge the word limit on those and it takes me good enough of a quantity of time, but considering the theme of this month, School, I would be betraying myself if I was not to share some scholastic adventures I have gone through.

I will, in an informal way, tell you about situations that have occurred to me in my current university. I am taking Computer Engineering, just for an extra point...

Also, I have grades between 0 and 20, 20 being the best.

So, I started university with a friend of mine. It was our goal to go through it together but we made a friend that was always the extra guy when it was time to make groups. He had failed twice, subjects, due to the fact he ended up with nonsensical assholes as work group. A reality far more dreading than one might imagine.

So me and me mate divided into two teams. I stayed with that extra guy and a stranger which perhaps, maybe there was a chance he was a worker. We formed a group and began the greatest challenge of our lives....just kidding, every subject's a great challenge.

Anyways, there was this subject called "Operative Systems" and, as a project, we were to make a File System, with some help. The project was composed of four different sections, to

be completed sequentially. It had 2 checkpoints, portraying two chapters, and a final delivery date on which we had to deliver the third and fourth. The first checkpoint was on a Monday. We met the Saturday prior, worked three hours, talked 5...approximately. We went back on Sunday and worked all day, from 9 am to 4 am, an epic struggle of bravery for ultimate success: A passing grade!!!!

Unfortunately, a mistake of versions and a little bug landed us a failing grade at that checkpoint. We fixed it in an afternoon and were side to side with the +A projects of other people by the end of the week.

For the second project, we completely ravished the competition. Again, we only worked one weekend, whereas the other guys worked the week. Why were we so bad? Well, most good groups are made of a good programmer and two good workers or decent programmers. We were a group of three good programmers and, more than that, one of us didn't go to classes, the other ones(me included) procrastinated and one of those two was incredibly confident in our ability. So, moving on...we worked mornings, afternoons, nights. We saw the sun dawn, set, the moon rise and set. Worst than that, none of us three had cars and the only place to eat was a Mac'Donald's half an hour away, walking.

And yes, we WALKED so we could fill out tummies, around 9 pm, cuz we knew we still had a lotta of hours to go and the

brain needs its calories. Also, you have more endurance with a full stomach, even if it's full of crap.

My group mates were beyond my control, in terms of optimism.

"What? Are you kidding?? People worked full weeks on that first checkpoint, we go and finish it in ONE day! Complete annihilation!"

"We failed the checkpoint..." I reminded them of our failure.

"Bad luck! It sucks but that was what it was. The checkpoints won't even count if we score high enough on the project, and we will: 20!"

"Sure sure." I would say, unconvinced.

"Dude, have you seen how much we've done yesterday and today?? We almost got it! All the tests of this checkpoint, almost all of them."

"Everyone else's got it."

"Bah, everyone else...two or three groups!"

And it carried on. In retrospect, spending the past two semesters with them really upped my confidence as well as the amount of testosterone in my balls, especially with what happened with this second checkpoint.

We came back from "dinner" so we could work more but, two hours later, we were playing Mario Kart with the chairs, 'cause they had wheels. Friend 'o mine kinda hurt himself too, fell right on ass... We joked, thinking of what the guard observing us through the security camera would be thinking now, of our pathetic spectacle. We were wasted...we were half awake when a friend of mine demanded we heard his idea. We did and I proceeded with the follow up idea that sealed the deal.

3 or 4 am, I was typing like a madman; I was seeing problems with the code, bugs after bugs, just by looking at it even though I'd been squinting my eyes for an hour.

A friend of mine tried to desist at that late hour, completely overwrought with confusion.

"We just dunno what we're doing anymore!"

"No, you don't know 'cause you're lost." I said, in a complaining, judging tone...I was not in the best of moods and I had asked him to keep reading over my stuff and make sure I didn't overlook anything.

"You still know what you're doing?"

"Yes."

"Ok, then finish it. We can look over it when you're done."

That meant he was about to lose sleep, but that's us, trust one another. We are a group.

I managed to pass a test but there was one last one that we got really close...

Next day, we tweaked it and passed the final tests. We delivered a 20 that didn't count for crap in the end but we fell asleep in classes with our honor intact...for we had done it!

Unfortunately, so had a lot of groups later...well, until some days after, hehe.

Some days later, we find out the teacher had 10 more secret tests, surprise tests. Only two groups passed them all and WE WERE ONE OF THEM. Arms in the air in ultimate heroic success, we filled our pride and character, we were HURRAHing all over the place, until it came the final checkpoint.

This one, due Monday, we started the weekend prior to that one, so to have a full week, but still we started late cause everyone was already a third way through.

Saturday we got there, read the third chapter and saw that it would be easy...our demise that day laid in two comments:

“Try to stop us, Lucifer.” That was a comment that received slaps. We were all atheist at the time, I’m not anymore, but me and the other still knew not to joke about it.

The second was “Hey, ever heard about the expression Black Hats? White Hats?”

“What are those?”

“They’re like the jedi of hacking, dude!” That was my fault, actually. But anyways, the point is we met up at 2, started working at 6 pm stopped at 7 to talk some more. We had dinner taking advantage of a ride, came back and talked some more. Around 9 pm we started work to finish that by 11. 4 am we were still there...we ran into a problem we couldn’t fix, nobody could fix, but only us idiots kept trying. We lost a night’s sleep and couldn’t work Monday and, in the end, it was the teacher’s fault. *shrugs*.

During that week, we finished the third chapter; I delivered the final touches and got it working alright, whilst the best group in our course was STILL 2\3 way. We finished the first part of the fourth chapter, in writing, before everyone finished the third chapter and when we tested it, it all went to hell. An odd bug didn’t even let us test it: “Invalid multibyte or wide character” was the error. It is the only error I ever memorized, it has been burned to our retina and memory. We didn’t stress though, certainly a teacher could offer us the same aid he offered others, and fix it.

BUT NO, the teacher looked at it and told us to google. We did and then he asked the meaning of the words that described the error, all of us three stared at him, dumbfounded, as he asked us “Hum...but what does he mean, corrupted?”. Without

giving us a chance, he so rightly said: “Don’t just stand there, it won’t fix it self. Attack the bug!” And he walks away. Detail, we spent 4 full afternoons and evenings debugging before talking to the prof, two days before delivery date...

He couldn’t solve it; neither could colleagues or other teachers. But we kept at it!

Midnight Sunday was the last chance; the class with that teacher was on Friday. We stick till 2 am, gave up and went home. Met up at 11 the next day and carried on.

On a completely wild guess, to END all wild guesses, after having tried hundreds of tests and other guesses, we fixed the problem one hour and a half away from the deadline.

PS: the untested first part of the fourth chapter passed everything in one go.

I looked at my mate, his optimism had gotten into me. I said:

“We got three submissions. We send one now, write up the code for the error messages tests, pass them and send the second, and then we try the final part.”

“But it’s the hardest! It’s-”

“We looked at it; we write the code, test all other chapters and just send it, so the teachers sees we know the stuff.”

In the end? The submission page broke down 15 minutes before the final delivery...we never got the new code in and finished the project with a 15.

To this day... my two mates, the only ones that are aware of how ahead we were before we met that infernal error, claim total and complete supremacy. Why? Among other things I’m about to innumerate, that was a project implying communication between a server and a client...and there was none faster than our server, handling requests.

“But there were 20s, 19s, 18s, there were a lot of people that-”

“-Asked teachers for help! GOT IT, on nonsensical shit WE fixed on our OWN. We were dominating everyone at the third chapter; heck, our first part of the fourth worked on our very first TRY. We were BEASTS man!”

“Titans”

“Behemoths of programming, alright?”

“hahahahaha, alright...” By the way, they do talk like that.

Anyways, I am, to this day, not convinced; I believe the final results are what count, for that is what people see. If you achieve ultimate glory and nobody sees it, there’s no issue in you feeling good about yourself, but you loose gloating privileges from the point you can’t present anything for it. The two fail to understand that.

On this other subject, this is all me, called Object Programming. There was this checkpoint and, on this subject, with the programming language Java, only I had worked with. And mostly copy pastes...It was a day to the checkpoint when I was working like a psycho, figuring everything out, that I could.

As it came to my bed time, if I wanted to sleep 8 hours, I looked at the project and lost 10 minutes just observing it...every part of what I had, knowing what I needed.

Afterwards, I took a half an hour bath, then went to the kitchen and caught a box full of sugar cookies. Yeah, they’re like: sugar coated with sugar filling. Around 30 of ‘em. Grabbed four bottles of water, sat on my computer, and did my first and only all-nighter listening to a soothing soundtrack in yet another epic attempt to save my grade from disaster, and that of my group.

The good news is I did it! The bad news is we messed up the submission and ended up with a 12 instead of 20. Figures, huh? The teacher was an idiot and I have hated him ever since, for the right working version was on a teacher’s gmail inbox, dated, and still he wouldn’t take it. In the end, I finished the subject with a 15 and basically on my own... I am teh effort <_<.

Anyways, another is my epic struggle in a Physics class. That physics class was made to cheat. No, seriously, before the test the teacher displays 15 theoretical presentations of theorems. 2 of them come out, exactly as he put them, and valuing 8 points... you pass with 9.5 -_-.

Me? I didn’t cheat. I MEMORIZED that crap but he gave FIVE of them the day BEFORE the freakin’ test. Unable to memorize them all, I left one. Guess what? Exactly.

Had a 6 on that one test...I had to have 9.5 as an average of two tests and along came the second. I studied my ass off!!!! They were only worth 8. I wanted to make sure that, even if I failed those 8, I could hit the practical problems for a 12. I did every problem the teacher gave 4 times, memorized all 15 beasts of explanations and, in the end, got a 13!!! ROAR!!!!

On the second semester of Physics it was a little more hardcore, I got a 7, a 10, passed with 9.5, hissing relief.

There are numerous more stories, of victory and defeat, of betrayal and lessons learned and taught. But I’m 4 pages in so it’s getting exaggarative.

College is the greatest experience in your life if you don’t waste it on booze and sex. Out of all that, I still consider that 13 one of my biggest achievements. Yeah, it wasn’t a good

grade but college said: “Only cheaters may pass” and I flipped a 1 and 3 with my middle finger and went on ahead, pass the fucker. I looked at the landscape... two painful weeks worth of cactuses and thorns, set to poison my will, my spirit, but I just shoved my arm in there to seize the passing grade, endured it.

I am going overboard with this but that is my message to you, reader...there are very few things that feel better than hard work being rewarded: when you see the prize, you set your mind and just ride the hardships against the wall of disappointments and disbelief, break it down and keep riding up the hill of exhaustion and pessimism until you grab your prize and break it all over hardships' head! ROAR! That's what living is all about!

It feels awesome, and to do it in group enhances the experience 'cause, no matter how diverse your personalities are, if you all care about achieving the goal, sooner or later it will show. Sooner or later, you will connect. For me, it has always been later, but it has always been shown, connected.

I have gone through, mostly, disappointment in my university. Bad luck has followed me and those of my group dearly and with an obsession worthy of pissing off Gandhi. But in the end, everything works out alright. I don't remember when I first said that but I learned it in the university.

If you work hard, you deserve it. If you deserve it...it will end well.

“Things might go wrong, but they end well.”

Kuzco

Cyber Eyes: A Tag Writing

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

It was raining. It nearly always rained in the big cities, exhaust fumes from the overheating car engines choked the sky and dropped toxic rain onto the people below. That is, if there had been any people below the cloud covered sky; with the acidic rain able to strip paint on the worst days the markets and walk ways had moved underground, relying on the massive works of guttering and purifying systems separating them from the drops of death above.

[\[Ash\]](#)

The underground was made of steel and concrete, nearly twenty feet below the streets above. The lights below in the crowded hallways were an illuminating Yellow and Green mix, rotating between them in a line about four feet up on the wall. It was nicer then when they had the overhead lights on. The over head lights were blinding at points, made to resemble the sun they were fixed into the ceiling on the corridors.

The main hallway, filled with homeless, merchants, guys wooing girls, and children skipping was bleak. When the rain started to pour it was as if life had lost color except for Yellow, Green and Grey which most wore. Any other colors meant you

were usually a rebel or dangerous to the cause of protecting the people from untimely doom.

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

There were those considered even more dangerous than the rebels, those who pretended to be normal folk with normal jobs and normal lives. While rebels tried to destroy technology, ridding the cities of the toxic smog above by destroying anything that would emit the harmful gasses; there were some people who were not considered "people", these people did not need to rely on the paths below the floor or the vehicles above. These non-people were immune to the deadly rain and could move about without any hesitation or hindrance; they looked just like ordinary people in their clothes of green, grey and yellow, but they had their own secret plans which made them so dangerous to the Government trying to keep the people in check.

[\[Ash\]](#)

These people were known as Cyber Eyes. An advanced technology implanted into them at birth, Cyber Eyes had just that, cybernetic eyes, skin, hair, everything. Created just under four years ago the Cyber Eyes have become the silent enemy of

the human race, killing in mass amounts with unfamiliar methods; pumping of water into lungs, suicidal hallucinations, and the ability to adsorb and release the toxic rain. They only attacked on the surface though.

There are approximately 100 Cyber Eyes in existence as they can not reproduce with each other, only spend years creating more and more. In the beginning there was one created by a mad scientist who wanted a blushing bride. She turned instead revealing the computers want over the human body and soul.

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

That is of course, one of the millions of rumours about how Cyber Eyes came into existence, though it is one of the most widely believed. Over the years the Cyber Eyes have been known of they have become a scape goat for every unexplained death or disaster, their strange origins and secretive manour easily explaining away even the oddest of deaths. In order to take down this threat to everyday life and peace as the masses know it, the Government has started their own special forces to eliminate the Cyber Eye menace; this so called "Tin Army" division was specially trained to take out the Cyber Eyes, they had superiority over all other law forces and could shut down an entire investigation with a single word.

However this story does not start with a rebel or a member of the Tin Army, not even with one of the hidden Cyber Eyes; this story starts with a normal man, one of the green, grey and yellow clad members of the public. His name is Nyto Polari, he lives at 296 Judge Street, and he's running home in the flashing

lights of the rain warning because his boss worked him late again.

[\[Ash\]](#)

Nyto Polari was a tall man to some standards, and to others short, that is to say he was medium in height to most. Today he was short being yelled at by the world's largest and meanest man. He stood their apologizing, he had to wait to get through security. The boss was having none of it.

"I say... If you are late one... more... time... YOU'RE FIRED!" The man in the black business suit screamed. It disturbed the other workers something firece, and they themselves were making a note to come in on time. "Now! Get out of my sights!"

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

'It isn't fair!' Nyto could have screamed as he calmly closed the office door behind him and pulled his bag higher on his shoulder 'It's not like he was early; and at least I had an excuse! Rebels send another fire shuttle into the rush hour and I can't get a cab for love or money; and then what happens? The damn thing blows up and drops a carrier onto the roof.' Nyto was walking along President Avenue now, the long way around to Judge Street; he glanced back over his shoulder at the water tight seals blocking off three streets. 'Damn rebels' he thought as he trudged along in the flashing rain warning lights.

[\[Ash\]](#)

Making his way slowly down to the elevator he was closed in with others rushing to seek protection. The doors closed and

the fixture began dropping quickly. It stopped softly, everyone made their way out including Nyto who turned right and began to head to a local vendor's.

'What a great day...' He thought sarcastically. 'Nearly get fired, rain and now... Shit I've been pick pocketed!' He began patting down his pants and couldn't find his wallet that had almost all the money to his name on it. Nyto quitting trying anything for the day through himself down against a wall and sat there, staring at the people walking by. Suddenly, as if by sheer luck, his wallet fell into his lap.

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

Nyto stared down at the wallet in his lap as if it was going to bite him, snatching it up after a moment before anyone else had the time to take it. 'Thank you Karma!' he almost screamed as he flicked through the contents; the money was all there along with the cards and his key card to get into his house. This almost depressed Nyto, it was almost as if the robber had considered his stuff not worth taking; alright Nyto didn't have much money in here but why was a pickpocket pitying him?

Nyto sighed and stood up, making his way over to the fast food store; as he flicked through the notes for a fifth time he noticed something was missing from his wallet. His identity card had been cut out of it's slot; which was weird since it had his picture and fingerprints on it and no one else could use it to pretend to be him. Shrugging he considered applying for a new one on the weekend as he began to pull out his money for a burger.

[\[Ash\]](#)

Nyto pulled out the exact money and waited in line for food. It was only a minute or so then he was at the front calmly ordering. One burger with everything, just like normal. He paid taking his food and left for the small set of tables in the middle of the food court area.

Eating he began to think more on the card. Didn't they know that they couldn't use it or was someone just making him go through more hassle. That was it; someone hated him and wanted to make him waste six hours on Saturday waiting in line for a new ID. The world was conspiring on him.

[\[Evolution X\]](#)

Nyto took several large bites from his burger, he was starving because he'd worked through lunch just to make up for being late. His wallet still troubled him though; if someone was just being an ass to him then why would they even bother to give it back? He twirled the leatherbound wallet for a second before it hit him; his head jerked up as his eyes began to scan the crowd. Who ever had dropped it back into his lap could have been one of a hundred people passing at the moment; who ever they were by this time they'd already be gone.

Sighing slightly to himself Nyto bit down onto the last of his burger, tucking the wallet away and chucking the wrapper away; he licked his fingers lightly before wiping them on his shirt. He glanced around again, dug his wallet deeper into his pocket so it didn't get pinched again, and walked out into the main stream of walkers. He blended into the others perfectly,

trying to figure his way back to Judge Street in the confusing mass.

[[Ash](#)]

As usual, when he found the elevator up to Judge street there was a red alert. Rain had gotten into the system and it needed to be drained and dried before operational. A ten minute process. While that was going on the crowd around the elevator diminished, people taking other routes up to their homes.

Finally the elevator was green lighted and the doors opened, heated air rushed out and hit their skin causing a slight burning sensation that dwindled away as the vents kicked on. Nyto stepped on to the elevator and was soon stuck at the back. The doors closed; jerking the elevator rose and jerked again for a stop. The doors opened and the people filed out as did Nyto.

[[Evolution X](#)]

'This place is falling to pieces' Nyto sighed mentally as he glanced around at the streets, walking along the pre-set path in his mind that would deposit him at Judge Street 'The Government should do something about it before we get daily floods.'

As he sauntered down the lines of ceiling high apartment towers his brow began to slowly crease; something was different about his walk today, and surely some of his usual paths had been blocked off by that truck cracking the roof. He spun around quickly, trying desperately to find a street name. Minister Boulevard! That was three levels below his own house! He must have been so preoccupied with his missing

identity card that he had gotten out at the wrong level. Groaning unhappily he began the long trek back to the elevator.

When he got back there however he could only stare in disbelief as a large muscled enforcer of the law blocked his way. When someone in the gathering crowd got the courage up to ask why the elevators were out of order the officer simply stated "We think there has been some Cyber Eye activity in the shaft, it is currently flooding faster than it can be disposed of; it's lucky that last lot didn't drown in rain."

[[Ash](#)]

'Cyber eyes...' Nyto thought to himself as pressing he made it out of the crowd to watch the events unfold safely. The crowd before him moshing at the words, interested in the death bringer. 'Well, I'll be... Cyber Eyes.'

Nyto was suddenly hit in the back by a group of people heading towards the crowd. He felt weird, as if something was deposited. He checked himself, there in his back pocket an ID had been deposited. It was his ID, his picture, and his thumb print. Nyto looked up and tried to find someone who would have given it back but couldn't see anyone. 'What a day.' He said shoving the card back into the pocket.

Add to this Tag writing at [Cyber Eyes@wiki](#)

Age of the Hunt: The Huntress Queen

As I promised on our last session, today I will discuss the personal story of our first queen, Kayla Banus The Establisher. She was once well known as the Huntress Queen and has not a title before that one; but I know her story from birth to death, and I will tell it in the hopes that you might understand a couple of messages.

Kayla Banus was born Kyla Banus in the year 2536, 25 years before she met King Jileo and, as I've described in another tale, killed The Protector.

A lesson in society must precede even the tale of her birth; now, there were two kinds of hunters back then: the ones in a group and the ones alone.

Groups were managed by the strongest hunter in them, all the others had to obey his commands and, if they did not obey, they either left the group, normally becoming their prey, or challenged the leader for leadership. This battle did not have to end in bloodshed because, though it was allowed, it was not a mortal combat for leadership.

Now, members of a group were normally safe to breed and raise children; the group protected them as their own, often taking years off hunting to help raise the child. So, families that belonged to a group were normally safe to raise their kids to be honorable hunters.

If you were alone, though, things were difficult...new hunters which only looked to increase their kill count often went after easy preys and it doesn't get easier than pregnant women and babies. It's a harsh reality but it still is...reality. But

do not think this Age to be without mercy; after all, Age of the Hunt saw the biggest wave of honorable human beings. Some

of these took it to themselves to defend such lonesome parents for they thought dishonorable to hunt such pathetically easy preys. This was an Age when men gave their lives for their principals, where you would be challenged to a battle should you offend their honor, this was the Age of the Hunt.

After many a tale, I finally present you a one of a hunter: the tale of Kayla Banus, The Huntress Queen.

She was born a member of a large group by the name of The Pines. They were around 20 and had secluded themselves in a swamp, so to protect the arrival and education of their 21th member, Kyla Banus.

Alas, three days after the baby was born, a man came by the cottage, knowing it to be the home to a group of hunters, a famous one, by the name of Pines.

This man approached without caution or stealth, and stopped 20 meters from the house, weighting on his shoulder the biggest sword any of the Pines had ever seen.

"What the fuck is that thing?!" One of the youngest asked, intimidated. "And how can he use it?"

"Relax. I will see what he wants." The leader said, opening the door. He closed the door behind him and spoke out.

"Who goes there?!"

“I give you fair warning: In a matter of seconds I will assault you and yours; I will see to it that every Pine is cut down, on this day.”

Two arrows peeked from inside the windows. The leader drew upon a shield with four blades at its extremities, as he heard the Pines draw upon their weapons.

“I challenge you to mortal combat; one of us dies and let that be the end of it.”

“No.” The man said. “I am afraid you have me confused. I am hunter of no man but of groups.”

“What...? Wait, you are that insane fighter, Vaa-”
“Vaarshi.”

Arrows flew at his head but he was already swinging the sword. The sword crushed the arrows and worked for his attack, the wave was actually a throw of the sword, without letting it go. He hopped forward and used the sword to leap an unimaginable distance, it seemed as though he was flying, being dragged by the sword. The leader put the shield to stop the mighty blade, knowing his men would kill him after that but Vaarshi flipped around and kicked his shield, compelling him to violently break the door down. He swung his sword, breaking the wall between windows, making the whole front of the cottage collapse.

An arrow hit his shoulder, but he paid no mind; he swung his sword again, killing five Pines.

This was before the man was known as the War Monger. He was, already at that time, feared: hunter groups were required to keep moving, lest they face Vaarshi, Hunter of Groups.

But they had to stay put for over 9 months; that was the primary cause that led to the destruction of the Pines. And the

woman responsible watched as Vaarshi brutalized her friends, her love, her father, as he ravished her home in what could only be described as unrelenting omnipotence. He was a titan, and around 8 minutes after his first swing, his sword finally stopped. The titan let the sword down and bent over full of muscle aches.

She looked at him: he was bruised, cut, three arrows in his body and one of the leader’s shield’s blades in his hip. He was lying down on his knees, breathing with effort.

“Huff...Huff...”

He coughed and spat blood at the ground; he then removed all the pieces on his body so he could tend to his wounds with small ointments he carried and pieces of torn tissue from clothes or sheets. He did it as he sat down, in silent endurance...she watched a man that had given his all to finish off The Pines.

She observed, helplessly aware of her fate, of her future; she felt the pain of guilt: The Pines had been found out because of her, and now, because she had given birth, she wasn’t in a condition to attack the wounded behemoth.

“I will not kill you.” Vaarshi suddenly spoke up; he put his dislocated shoulder back in its place, and then added. “I have no concern for the individual prey, let alone an easy one. All I want is unfair fights...” He let her know as he stretched his arms and looked up through the busted ceiling, at the sky. The sun was setting, hiding behind the massive trees that composed the swamp.

“I will prove to be the strongest, under heaven and earth!” He had a gaze of one looking at the Gods themselves, basking in their glory; he finally looked at her with a serious

gaze. He glanced at the baby who cried loudly and irritatingly, a deafening frustration.

“Feel free to form a band of avengers and ambush me. I want the challenge.”

“You are a monster.” She spoke out. “You have befell such a tragedy on me, one I have fault in, and you can not even **end my misery??!**” She yelled, crying her heart out, frustration added at the inability to move.

“You have a dagger with you.” He pointed out, cracking his back and neck, trying to relax. “End it yourself, if you are so intent. I will not shame The Pines.”

“YOU KILLED THEM!!!”

“In honorable combat!” He argued back, offended. “Are you so blind with anguish that you cannot tell what happened here today?”

She looked down, avoiding Vaarhi’s gaze. She reflected at the misery of the world, the downfall that was the society she had revered so much. She understood alright, Vaarshi had challenged all the Pines to a battle, one where he had abominable disadvantage. His achievement was worthy of praise and the Pines had gone down fighting what could become the strongest hunter in the world, the King... and they went down standing. She looked back but he had vanished. Like a tornado, he had whirled by, taken everything only to leave her a survivor. It was over, and yet the cries subsisted.

“BE QUIET!” She screamed tears and snot.

Filled with sorrow, convinced they would not survive, the woman did what she considered to be the best. And the best was her survival: she abandoned her own daughter, Kyla

Banus, to fate...a fate represented in the currents that directed a river near there.

7 years old and Kyla Banus was already facing insurmountable odds as well as already having god-blessed luck; a luck that would accompany her throughout her life...

On this day, it manifested in a thirsty hunter who picked her up from the river. He brought her to his hidden home where he lived alone with his sterile wife.

Seeing Kyla as a gift, they decided to keep her and also decided to keep calling her the name that was on a note which rested with the crying baby in the box she sailed on.

An experienced hunter of around 50 years old and his wife of around 45 by the name of Porti Manacus and Lirya Kika Manacus thus adopted her.

Feeding off flora, the family of three lived on that same house for as many as 6 years. She was educated as all humans were, at that time; she was growing to be a hunter. She was relentless in her tasks and feared very little; when Kyla was half over six years old, on a day she was happily goofing off with her father whilst her mother prepared their dinner:

“Now you both stop it!” Lirya demanded, setting the food tray on the table. “You kids come along and eat.”

“You kids? Am I a child, Lirya?”

“You behave like one.” She argued.

“Hahahahaha.” Kyla laughed. “You’re a kid like me, hehehhee.”

“Gah, my honor!” He complained, grabbing his heart.

Suddenly, he and the wife turned stiff. They stared in the exact same direction they were looking at but their expressions went blank. Two or three seconds they stood like

that, for they had become aware that a hunting party had their house surrounded.

Kyla didn't know what was going on, but she felt like keeping quiet.

"They are experienced." Porti stated, looking at his wife. Lyria, knowing what that meant, knowing her husband, looked back at him and pleaded.

"No...do not-"

"-I have too." He put Kyla on the table and patted her head. "You have a name far mightier than ours, Kyla. Never forget that you are strong, always remember to be unwilling to forgo your principles, to disrespect your honor, yourself. You are Kyla Banus..." He kissed her forehead and looked at her confused and yet terrified expression. "...may that name resonate through history."

"My love..." Lyria called out.

"I must not waste any more time. I will goad them away; save our daughter, keep her safe but most of all, make her strong."

"I..." Trying to contain desperate tears, Lyria lets out restrained ones, hiccupping mildly as she maintains composure. "I will."

While she complied, Porti removed a double bladed spear from a cabinet. He looked back at the two women he loved whilst shouting, in a prideful manner:

"AH! I could hear you in my sleep, amateurs. You think to collect my head with such skill?" he turned his head towards the window and ran, leaving behind little else than half a tear. "I am Porti Manacus, of the Ions! I shall give you the hunt of your lives!!!"

Outside, an underling communicated with the leader, as Porti jumped out the window and ran into the bushes. Moments later:

"We move for Porti!" Someone shouted outside, making approximately fifteen men dash off.

Lyria grabbed the screaming, complaining little girl and made a run for it, just in case.

At 6 years old, Kyla Banus saw her father sacrifice himself for her and her mother, run out into the night with small possibility of ever seeing him again.

The Marauders claimed Porti Manacus, the leader of the Ions, as their prize, hence stealing the honor from Vaarshi.

Lyria moved away from the swamps and into a jungle far deeper and steeper than the swamp she had resided in. They would no longer sleep in a house, on a bed, eat off a table: they would sleep on trees, eat off logs or their hands, and survive.

Lyria became a much harsher mother after what happened: no longer did she offer comfort or niceties; no longer did she show restraint on her tests, on her education of Kyla. She turned cold and hard towards her adopted daughter and taught her to move, sneak, fight and take care of her appearance.

When Kyla was one day short of 10 years old, one day before the celebration of finding her, Lyria called to her.

"Kyla, I can see already you will be a beautiful woman." Puzzled, for Kyla was rarely complemented on anything, she waited for the rest. "Today you will go into the town that exists 20 miles out north of this forest. There, you will convince a boy to follow you into an alley and there, you will kill him."

"Wha-"

“Be quiet. You will slit his throat immediately, lest he call upon the attention of adults. You will then cut a string of his hair and bring it to me. Do this and I will speak what comes next to the complement.”

“I...I am huntress.” Kyla spoke out, humbly. “Why would I not hunt?” Lyria smiled, mildly content at her reaction, but then put a serious expression, telling her:

“You will hesitate, Kyla. Everyone does, ‘tis the true hunters that truly grow out of it.”

“I thank your advice, mother. I will return tomorrow.”

And so Kyla, 10 year old girl bathed, dressed herself with small rags as a shirt and skirt, put on slippers on her tiny feet and left the forest in one direction, for her first incursion on society.

Hours of traveling later, she arrived at the town by the name of “Amazon”. But she didn’t just walk in; she waited, in wait, for a group of travelers. When they came, she casually just followed them at a distance, looking distracted.

She walked as a distracted child that is moving slower and thus with greater distance than the other members, so no adult would question her or think something of her. And she carried on until she saw a group of kids, around her age, playing around with their daggers and small shields.

She thus parted ways with the group, and made her way towards the children. All of them had knives, obviously.

“Hello.” She smiled, greeting them full of innocence. “May I join you?”

She looked around the group. Some hesitated but a few agreed. She played with them, simulated fights, daring challenges, all on which she didn’t show her true skill. What

she did do was examine how the boys reacted towards her. There was this quiet boy, friendly introverted cutie who had an evident crush on her looks. She played for hours, having fun in the meanwhile; as the sun began to set, she invited him, suggestively, to a more private location so she could give him a present, as thanks for his courteous and dear behavior towards her.

“So...what did you-”

“Ever kiss a girl, Thom?” She asked, mildly giggling. She was a terrific actress. Rendered uncomfortable and fidgety, the boy, facing down, answered a cute and shy.

“No...”

“Want too?”

“If...if it’s you.” He said in a rather quick manner, looking to the side.

“Well...” She acted also shy, hesitant on her feelings. “Me too. Close your eyes.” She requested, in an abrupt manner that was in league with the demeanor she had presented during those so many games.

“Hum...kay.”

And that was it, she drew her dagger and moved it towards his throat but, as predicted, she hesitated. She held the dagger inches from the boy’s neck, looking at him with doubt and pain in her heart. She looked at the boy, well natured, cute, shy, nervously awaiting a kiss; she had preyed on his feelings to make him this...but she was a huntress. Her mother had taught her: some preys are cute, others don’t deserve to die... but that doesn’t make them any less of a prey.

Nevertheless, she held out two fingers in her other hand and slowly carried them to the boy’s lips. The truth was she liked him, but that made him no less a prey. She touched the

boy's lips to give him the impression of a kiss, the joy of one, and then just stared blankly into space as the other hand slit his throat in one swift movement.

The boy opened his eyes and gurgled as he tried to scream, horrified at what was happening; indifferent to him, keeping a cold, bloodied expression, she grabbed his hair and cut a piece off; then threw everything on top of the kid, who was already lying down, bleeding to death, keeping one string.

And then she ran.

Seeing her run and facing her back instead of her bloodied front, the kids assumed she had been subject to assault and was thus running. Laughing, they ran to mock the shy one and his lost opportunity at a cute girl, only to find him dead. They came out of the alley only to have already lost sight of her.

Some time later, she arrived at her mother's current location of rest. Lyria was relieved to see she was alive as Kyla handed the string of hair to her. Lyria examined her composure: She was emotionless, still stained with blood and sweat, controlling her breathing, her exhaustion.

"Come, I will wash you and your clothes."

And so it was done. Kyla Banus made her first claim on her birthday, for a day had passed meanwhile. While she was washed, she heard as her mother fulfilled her promise.

"You are a woman to be coveted after, Kyla. So hear my advice: You will walk around covered in a cloak with a hood. When you feel the need to seduce your prey, remove the cloak. When you feel the need to garnish sympathy, lower the hood and act. Otherwise, keep them both on so that you may hunt as an equal, challenge your preys with your honor, as well as your skill. You will also pick a cloak that might induce fear

on those that fear what they do not know. They are few, but intimidation is a coin of our Age."

"Yes mother."

"Also, I will warn you on your every birthday as of now. On your sixteenth birthday, if we are both alive, I will hunt you."

"What?!" Kyla reacted, very much surprised.

"We live in a society of hunters. It will teach you there is no one you can trust. When it comes the time, I will not hesitate. If you wish to live longer, you will kill me before, or at that time. I will encourage you to make your attempt soon. Nevertheless, I will start training you in the use of dual short swords, tomorrow. With any luck, you will understand how to beat strength with agility."

Kyla was dumbfounded, looking at Lyria who refused to look her in the eyes. But she had just killed a boy, all she had to do was keep going with her grief, kill more inside of her, and just keep going. So, with a deadened heart, she looked forward and coolly replied.

"Yes mother."

When Kyla was thirteen, she chased and hunted down a group of three teenagers that were observing the two. Lyria spotted them, Kyla killed them thus adding three more strings of hair to a little pouch she carried with her. Every birthday she heard the phrase.

"On your sixteenth, I will kill you. I urge you to claim me beforehand." And the final phrase about the subject was: "You have but a year. Why do you not make your move?"

"I will not make my move when you expect me too." Was Kyla's answer, which garnished mild respect from the seasoned middle aged huntress Lyria.

In the end, Kyla did what Lyria least expected. She ran away. But just because Lyria didn't expect it, it doesn't mean she wouldn't notice it.

She noticed and that's how the hunt began. Kyla had, by now, grown into a full grown woman. She wore a black cloak and hood that covered her well carved body, long brown hair as well as her dark eyes. The middle aged Lyria thus hunted Kyla for over an hour, running after her through bushes, trees, through really heavy vegetation.

"Stop it mom! This is moronic!" Kyla complained, out loud, as she paused on a tree branch. Her mother didn't equally stop, though, jumping against her whilst arguing back:

"Moronic is for you to be the prey." Kyla had to jump back to avoid being stabbed, she landed and continued running.

"You are exaggerating. I have seen families, why can't we be one?!"

"You must be a huntress, or else you will not survive to see your twenties. That can not be achieved with love, but with survival, not by running away, but by killing, hunting. Kill me or you die, it will be that simple your whole life. Besides, you are adopted, not of my own blood."

"Mother!"

"It is Lyria!" She yelled. "Now face me and fight, coward!"

"No, I will not kill you." Kyla argued, forced to stop lest a dagger thrown by Lyria hit her. She turned around, knowing she had no time to resume the run before Lyria hit her.

"What makes you think you can, child?" Lyria asked, as she shoved a dagger through the cloak. A clean hit that rebounded with a loud *clank*.

Lyria looked at Kyla, surprised. "You got-" Lyria feels a deep pain on her side, one that interrupt her.

"I arranged some armor...I..." Kyla's eyes give in to the emotion, she begins to cry. "I thought you wouldn't...I can not believe you actual-" Her voice broken and interrupted by Lyria who spoke:

"I am a huntress-COUGH-..." Lyria stated, coughing out blood, letting her body fall on her knees. "Our greatest priority is to...ugh, to claim the most formidable of prizes, of preys. And I have raised you to be the most formidable ever." Lyria let a crying Kyla know, as she brushed her hand on her cheek, the only act of affection in a decade. She looked at Kyla with kindness and relief in her eyes.

"Cry, cry your heart out, your spirit out, your soul out, for when you leave this forest, you must cry never again."

"I..."

"Never, ever, again. Cry, my daughter, and rejoice...you are a proud, skilled, honorable...huntress."

The old woman's hand fell down; the eyes lost color and the wrists their pulse; Lyria Manacus was dead.

Kyla hugged the corpse, shoving her head on Lyria's chest, doing as her mother had commanded. Silently, and for some time, she cried pouring sadness unto her mother's clothes and blood.

When she was done, she went into that same town, traded the black cloak and hood for a red one, challenged a seasoned hunter for his old army boots, claimed him, and thus began her time as an emotionless, merciless, but proud and honorable, huntress.

My next tale will continue with Kyla's trials and tribulations as a hunter, before she became a queen. But, by this time, Kyla was already at an advanced level of skill. She never joined any group during her time as hunter, remaining alone and unknown...a simple huntress that quietly, but effectively, filled her pouch with hundreds of strings of hair...ever so devout to the Way of the Hunt.

But that will be the next tale, the tale of a hunter that lived out and was instrumental in various events that took place during the last days of the Age of the Hunt.

Smell of new note books

Shy students hiding in back

Silence floods the rooms

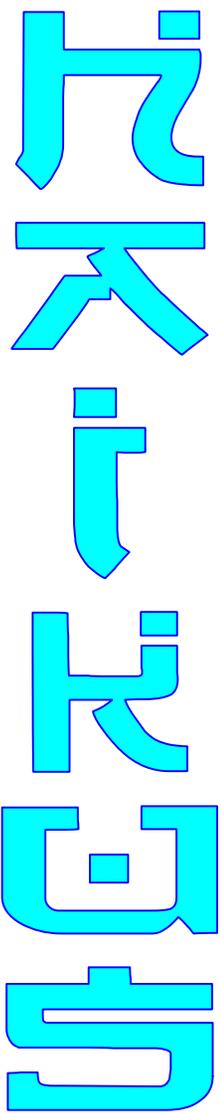
by evolution x

Slide up and then down

Hit the ground and do it over

wood chips in my socks

by ash



Autumnal azure

swallows up each of my griefs

carries it away

by calann

First it smells like love

Hands clenched together tightly

Sweet nothings in ear

By ash