

The Voice of...



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spring
2014



The Voice



Tight

I can feel this net.
Tight across my chest,
Caught inside myself,
These chains I cannot wrest
Although I paw and claw at them,
Too deep for me to get.

And I can feel my heart.
Beating just too hard,
Beating just too fast,
A twinge from some small shard,
This pain that always lasts,
Please don't come apart.

'Cause I can feel the cracks.
Straining with my breath,
Begging for a crutch
I get scared to death,
I don't need too much,
Just don't turn your backs.

-Mike Schuetz



me, handing me a certificate of accomplishment. "In recognition of completing such rigorous mission work, we would like to welcome you into membership of our advanced forces," the voice continued. "Advanced training will begin in 139 days. Begin preparing."

Commentary: This is somewhat of an exaggeration about school. Including summers (those periods of calmness), it takes around 1390 days to finish high school and survive being bombarded with textbooks, essays, other students/teachers, and school lunches in a rather chilly building. Then you graduate and get one school-free summer to relax before going to college. It's a rough four years and I think we are definitely honorable mission-completers for surviving high school.

-Jordan Karnyski

LILACS AND PROCRASTINATION

Wilted lilacs droop towards the windows,
Begging to be reunited with the home I tore them from to
decorate my own home.
Their dried up petals scatter on my desk alongside the papers
of the

Five billion projects I have to do
(Okay, only five)
Eyes and philosophies and economies and by-part integrals –
Words and numbers of which I really prefer better when covered
with

Specks of purple and white.
But the days count down faster than the hours
they're made up of,

Although slower than petals that keep falling over my notes.
They may decorate the pages of nonsense,
And I may like them better than sleepless nights of work,
But I do need to work, and they're in my way.

-Jordan Karnyski

though, when nothing tried to attack me for months at a time – which was great recovery time. But needless to say, this was not what I had in mind when I signed up for this.

I lost count of the days after the first one hundred and eighty-three or so, figuring I would never be saved from my mission, even if I did survive to complete it, since my earpiece had died. I'd be trapped in this monstrous void forever. I continued trudging on.

But eventually one day, whilst fighting off another army of I-don't-even-know-what, slicing up my hands and face with the creatures' razor-sharp edges, I happened to see a light off in the distance. It was only faint glow, the size of a tennis ball at most, hundreds of feet away or more, yet it captured my attention with a magnetic force. As if I actually were a magnet, I was drawn towards that light; I had no idea why, but I had to reach it. That light, the first light I had seen in hundreds of days, lifted my spirits and intoxicated me with an inexplicable feeling of warmth and satisfaction. I ran for it, using the skills I had gained over the past few hundred days to terminate any roadblocks in my way.

And then I reached the end. It took a few days longer than I anticipated, but I finally reached the light, which I found was not actually tennis ball-sized, but rather big enough for me to walk into. Desperate to leave the never-ending icy blackness, I ran into it as if the light would envelop me in its warmth and save me from my mission. And it did. Opening my eyes, for I had closed them as I used every last ounce of energy to leap from one unknown into the next, I was home. Surrounded by familiar faces, standing on a ground differentiated from the sky, free from the dangerous creatures that threatened my life until this point, I survived.

"Congratulations, 09833," a robotic voice said, addressing me as they did all of us with my citizenship number, "You have successfully completed your mission." A man walked towards me, offering to collect my weaponry in exchange for a white robe typical of mission-completers. A different man then approached

Twenty walked in a line...

Twenty walked in a line.

They were all the same. Teenagers ranging from around fourteen to nineteen. None were above. Some were below. The group of them wore the same clothing. White button down shirts with ruffled collars and black dusty pants that ended at the ankle, exposing a small fraction of skin above their feet. None wore shoes.

Twenty walked in a line.

They all stared down as they stumbled forward upon the endless tracks. Train tracks, they were. Moldy lines of iron stretching across the straight normal plain betwixt the parallel layers of trees. The sets were exactly the same length from the tracks. Identical. And as far as the group of people knew, the tracks didn't have an end. Nor did they hear one engine approaching.

Twenty walked in a line.

The air was dead with silence. No birds. No animals whatsoever. There were no crickets or sounds of wind. The atmosphere was flat, like the ground. And so were the children's faces.

Twenty walked in a line.

No one talked while they took the painful steps onto one wooden board between the lines of iron, then the next. But none cried out in pain. None stopped to call for help. It was against the rules to speak. Unfortunately for them, it wasn't against the rules for the bottoms of their feet to sting. And sting they did.

It was their punishment.

Twenty walked in a line.

A young lad, aged twenty, led the pack of young. He stood erect as he alone marched while the others hunched forward. He strut, while they stumbled. There was a constant difference between the two sets of peoples. Instead of their black and white attire, he was dressed in a camouflaged suit, and a green soldier's cap. Unlike the others, he wore brown leather boots strapped in black buckles. Yet they were too small. His feet hurt as much as the others.



SURVIVE

“You have approximately 1,390 days to complete your mission,” the robotic voice instructed me through the device in my ear. “Failure to do so will result in immediate discharge from our services.”

“What exactly is my mission again?” I asked, looking at what lay in front of me. A bleak, gray landscape stretched on indefinitely, utterly void of anything except myself. There was no way I needed the fifty pounds of equipment given to me to survive this. There wasn’t anything to survive.

I took a step to turn around and see what was behind me (surprise – more grayness), and never got to hear the information I needed to be repeated to me. That one step I took backwards – or forwards or left or even up for all I knew – caused the ear piece to burst in my ear with a piercing crack. Dead. Immediately, the grayness slipped into a blackness that blanketed my vision, bringing with it a temperature drop to prove I had spoken too soon. Gravity seemed to double, placing more pressure on my shoulders until I fell to my knees under its weight. However, I found it wasn’t gravity weighing me down when I went to protect my head from imploding, but rectangular-shaped bricks of all different sizes. They continued piling up with each minute I stalled in confusion until I finally remembered the laser I had in my bag. The green light pierced the darkness, highlighting every brick as it pierced through their bodies as I tried to free myself.

So maybe this infinite gray landscape wasn’t as harmless as I thought.

Over the course of the next thirteen hundred days, I fought tooth and nail to get out of whatever place this was and complete my mission. The cold temperatures turned my skin blue, despite the thermal suit I wore underneath my uniform. And with that making it hard enough to concentrate, I was pelted with new bricks every hundred days or so. But that was only the beginning. I had more sleepless nights than not – or at least what I pretended to be night, considering it was always dark – preparing myself for the “days” to come. I fought off monstrous things that grabbed at my arms and legs, trying to force my head into the fang-rimmed holes on their faces and other monstrous things that tried to force themselves into my body. Although I occasionally got sick, I stumbled through the blackness every moment I could, luckily having a sword to ward off most dangers and wishing I had been even luckier to have been given some kind of light to guide me. There were periods of calmness,



Twenty walked in a line.

Every single one of the following sheep in the herd had sullen, empty expressions, and the soldier expressed a curt display of contempt. The heat, the road, everything. His blue eyes were staring narrowly ahead, at what he knew to be the end. But he couldn’t tell the others. Or else his punishment would be far worse than what the others had yet to face. His coarse tongue smeared over his dry lips. The air was hot and arid, and branded his mouth like a hot poker. They had been chapped for the past four hours. And he knew that there was longer to go. Much more distance had yet to be covered.

Twenty walked in a line. And while there were no chains, they all carried heavy burdens. And the shackles that weighed upon them sang its haunting song.

-Chris Stoll

HOW NOT TO GET CANCER

Cancer is bad. No one wishes to contract such an illness, and with the right precautionary measures, it is 100% avoidable. Simply begin each day with a big bowl of organic oat bran with a side of fruit. Neither, of course, containing any use of pesticides. (You as a consumer can full heartedly trust the producer, since big corporations would never lie to sell their product, right? Right?) Repeat other plant based meals for lunch and dinner as well to ensure prevention. The consuming of saturated fats, hydrogenated fats, sugars has dire consequences. Those pesticides are tricky, not to be reckoned with. After limiting your diet, it is imperative that before you step outside, you lather yourself in sunscreen (recent reports that SPF 1203 is the most effective) continue to dress yourself covering most visible skin, the sun is a scorcher at a sweltering 48°F. It is helpful to bring sunscreen along for reapplication. Just in case. Before leaving the house drink a filtered glass of water to stay hydrated. Filtration is necessary to keep cancer causing chemicals that come from the faucet, out of your body. Moreover, water bottles have been proven to cause breast cancer, especially if left outside in the heat. If you find yourself meandering through town, covered in sunscreen, a stomach full of filtrated water and pesticide free fruit and bran, and you happen upon someone up the block smoking a cigarette, be sure to run up to them and dump a bottle of water you can't drink on them and their cigarette so you and fellow civilians do not have to inhale the deadly second hand smoke. Since the outside world is proven to be one giant carcinogen, most days it is simply easier to stay in and breathe in the fresh air from your air purifier. As you can see, simply steps can be taken in your everyday life, to eliminate your chances of getting cancer.



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-Kristen Williams



Living Longer Through Science:

To Whom It May Concern:

I'd like to discuss a topic that is very near and dear to my heart . Society as a whole is beginning to think that organic items are better for human consumption. The real question that we have to ask ourselves is this really relevant in history ? We look back throughout the ages and find that people do not have the lifespan that they do now. And why is that? It's not because of organic vegetables and fruits and animals that have been raised without artificial growth hormones. For example in the 1930s the average lifespan of many Amuricun citizens did not surpass seven decades, primarily because they were eating organic fruits and vegetables and also eating meat without artificial growth hormones. Now, in the 21st century, with pesticides being sprayed on our fruits and vegetables and artificial growth hormones injected into animals, our society as a whole is living longer healthier and stronger. The Amurikun government is trying to decrease those dependent on Social Security so therefore they are trying to push organic fruits vegetables and meats and the citizens in charge them more money. It is better to take and eat meats like spam, and to find all the fruits and vegetables you can sprayed with DDT. As a result, your life span will increase and you will be living a healthier life. So the next chance you get go out and buy a McDouble after your workout, better yet by the Mickey D's dinner box for there will be a greater bang for your buck.

Unorganically Yours,

Austin Hopkins



Chapter 50: "In which the Main Conflict is Resolved and All the Loose Ends are Finally Tied Together and the Fate of Our Hero is Discovered"

For the last time, poised on the brink of the future and the edge of the past, I walked along down that foggy alleyway. The cobblestones seemed to fall away under my feet like the good friends that I had passed along the way to here: nowhere. It had been long since I visited this alley, (you will recall that our protagonist did visit the alley in Chapter 4 to determine the status of Ernst and Kelly in their insurmountable predicament involving the driver of the street sweeper) and the familiar smell of rotting fish by the bay clung to me, begging me not to press onward. I pulled the trench coat closer around me; nothing could stop me now. I noticed the bicycle from my last visit, with its seat replaced with Fredrick's little shoe. More bad memories as I thought of the children. I pressed on. My final destination was in sight through the milky fog: The Rue the Day Café. It was behind those swinging doors that my destiny awaited.

Steeling my nerve, I burst through the doors, one of which fell off its hinges. The room looked like it had been through a Civil War battle, with blackened, rent floorboards, an axe head through the counter, and the picture on the wall hung upside down. Yet the bartender was standing, calmly polishing a fine example of Eastern glassware; a Polish polish. Taking one step into the room, the bartender looked up from underneath the metal curtain of his unibrow. Another step, and I could hear his inhaler. Of course; he was an asthmatic. It was all making sense now. One more step took me up to the bar, and I noticed that either the room was really small or my steps were really long. I looked into his eyes, and saw the shadow of Florence, my Florentine love, there. There was only one thing to do. Reaching into the trench coat, the eyes of the bartender drifting quickly downward in horror, I pulled from the inside pocket a rubber chicken. It placed it firmly on the counter.

"You're messenger, I believe. I...intercepted him," the bartender cringed as my merciless gaze wore him down. He knew that I knew where the message was. Pulling a can opener from the other pocket, I quickly ripped the stomach of the rubber creature open. Inside, there was the missing two grand, in cash, and the note that would finish it all. As I

CEREAL KILLERS: THEIR FIGHT FOR LIFE

Let's just start with the fact that no, I am not ashamed, in fact I am proud to say that I love cereal killers. They complete the mission that many are simply too scared to do. They do the dirty work that society attempts to turn a blind eye to. They are changing the world as we know it. Cereal killers exterminate the biggest danger to people, cereal. Cereal holds an average of about 30g of carbohydrates, a trigger to childhood obesity, per serving. Now, we all know that no one actually looks at the serving size, as we live in America where it is okay to have "curves" and to be "big-boned", where it is okay to go to McDonalds every day, where it is okay to constantly eat away our feelings. Thus every human who consumes cereal digests about 90g of extra unnecessary carbohydrates per day just from their breakfast.

About children is included consump- Also, many is devoured per day. able. Cereal most no ue except ber, pro- grains, soy,



These are completely inane ingredients. Who really needs a supply of whole grains, or fiber? With no vital nutrients comprised, why does cereal exist? Cereal killers are vigilantes against heart disease, diabetes, heart attacks, obesity, high cholesterol, not to mention death. Support towards these fighters for life needs to be in order. The more support they gain, the more cereal they are able to kill. Anyone who is willing to kill this carb-filled exterminator is invited to join groups such as CKA (Cereal Killers Anonymous) or NMC (No More Cereal). It is essential to not only your future, but to the future of the world to aid those who are simply trying to kill cereal before it kills you.

99.9% of obese say that cereal in their daily tion of food. add that cereal multiple times This is despic- contains al- nutritional val- for wheat, fi- tein, whole bran, and barley.

- Erin Nason

LIFT-OFF AND BEYOND

The transcendent realm of sky
itself makes way for winged
metal
to take

flight.

Lift-off,
and thrust conquers me--
I am the force--straining gravity
on the climbing slope
to Heaven.

I am one
with sturdy limbs
that banking here
now mounting soar
in the realm of sky
where hindrances are fallen
away,
and barriers beyond
the grasp of thought.

With no direction,

I am free.

In the transcendent realm of
sky
I am free to reach
beyond those shackles--
the circles of the world.

And to harry there
with no clouds of care
making fun
to race with the sun.

In the engines of my flight,
sheer power roars,

whose frosted emission
grapples the air

with fingers that pull away
the lands where all remains
which ever I beheld.

From loft above
a view seldom to survey
unveils a life trivially pursued
and a personal geography
so surely known

in shambles.

The horizon I can see
as never have I before,
and still yet hiding
under shroud of clouds,
there lies even now
the place where I will stand

on my horizon.

-Benjamin Bachman



reached for the crumpled-up piece of tissue that bore the message, which had certainly been used, men crawled out of the woodwork and jumped me. In an instant, I was on the ground. The bartender, suddenly wearing a sombrero, stood over me sinisterly. Wait...a sombrero! It all made sense now! Was it he who really had controlled the ruined Spanish toilet paper company in Guatemala where Vincent and I had been separated? He took the rubber chicken by the neck and hung it over me.

“You are finished...” the Spanish bartender said in a thick, Russian accent. “This ends now, Inspector.” I struggled, but his men had me in an iron grip. From his shirt he pulled a watermelon that had been an inconvenient part of his disguise.

“Goodbye, senior...” he told me, and raised the watermelon. Only he and I knew that the watermelon in fact contained the greatest bomb ever designed in the Universe that would destroy the Earth, manufactured in a “toilet paper” company in Guatemala staffed by children who knew too much, like the innocent Frederick, who was killed on his seat-less exercise bicycle on the way to work. The fish died in hundreds when it was fist tested in the river, notifying the authorities that something was up, so they sent me and my partner, Vincent, in to investigate. But I had had no idea that my Florence had been in on the scam too! She needed to collect the insurance money from my death to help her ill father in Puerto Rico, and I had fallen for her charms, her guiles, and her peg leg. As for the chicken, I had anticipated that right on the nose; it was filled with the note from the buyer of the bomb and the money inside to pay for it. I had come so close, but now it was all over. I closed my eyes and waited for the end. But then, a glimmer of hope burst through the door, and the evil bartender-factory manager-bomb-maker- sombrero-wearer looked up to see...

A. Vladimir Putin, the real hero of the story all along. Bursting into the café, which was really a tavern in disguise as a café, he and his men engaged in the following struggle, in which the bomb was dropped. A flying tackle on the part of

WELCOME TO THE DUNGEON

our protagonist saved the day, and the bartender was forced into exile.

- B.** Ernst the caretaker of a local museum who had decided to go to the café for supper. Entering, he saw the commotion and charged into the fray, none of the others knowing that Ernst was, in fact, Vincent, my partner in disguise. He wrested the weapon from the bartender's hands, with his immense beard entangling the bartender's men and saving the day.
- C.** Frederick, who had recovered from his injuries somehow and come to my aid. The plucky ten-year-old managed to singlehandedly beat all of the bartender's men into submission and shoved the bartender under the floorboards, never to be seen again.
- D.** Nothing. The wind had blown the doors open, and the bartender blew up the Earth before realizing how poorly-thought-out his whole plan was, since he was still on the Earth.

FINIS

The Author sat back in his chair, looking over his finished second novel smugly.

"They told me that the ending to the first book wasn't good enough...I was mocked by reviewers and critics for my silly plots and writing style. But now I have given them a great piece of non-literature that is so silly that no one will ever take it seriously. I even have multiple endings, just to show them that my first book *was* good enough! If they thought the first was silly, then they'll all *love* this one!"

The spiteful Author laughed maniacally, tipping over his chair and hitting his head on the floor. As for his book, the plot was still silly, as were all the endings, but did it become a New York Times Bestseller.

The world today is a very complex and confusing place. It is my humble opinion that this world could be a lot simpler and easier to live in if we all followed a specific set of rules. "What set of rules should we live by?" you might find yourself wondering. Why the 3.5e D&D rules published in June 2003 published by Wizards of The Coast, you silly fool!

With a simple roll of the dice all your complex problems and social interactions will be easily dealt with. Taking tests? That's simple just make a knowledge check and add your respective modifier a normally time consuming and nerve racking endeavor is simplified to a few rolls of the dice. Getting in a fight? Easy. Just roll for initiative and make a strength check, the winner of these rolls then has free reign to beat the snot out of their opponent. Ever find yourself wondering if the person you are talking to is lying? Well just make a sense motive check, you silly goose, and the person will be forced to reveal their true intentions to you. Trying to brush your teeth? With a simply d100 die roll see if you are able to successfully brush your teeth, roll a 100 and have your teeth cleaned forever, roll a 1 however and you will fail so badly at brushing your teeth you shatter your jawbone. There are a plethora of different situations that can be made so much simpler if everyone just followed all the same rules.

"But how would one be able to enforce these rules in everyday life?" (some mindless fool might find themselves pondering). Well, you nosey meddler, the solution is quite simple, real life Dungeon Masters. All the governments of the world will simply appoint a questionably certified social introvert to follow you around and arbitrarily pass judgment on you and all the actions you take in life. Although critics might find it odd that these social pariahs, that may or may not have had any previous human interaction, have the authority to follow your every movement, and I mean every movement, they simply must remember that if they keep bothering the DM they might find themselves engaged in a random encounter with the city guard, a pack of kobolds, a ravenous face hungry mongoose or some other similar monstrosity or misfortune. As any rational and reasonable thinking being can agree, my idea of D&D dice rolling is clearly the most effective and useful for implementation in real life.

-Maxwell Goodrich